

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8, 1915.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S PONY EXPRESS; OR GETTING THE MAIL THROUGH ON TIME

AND OTHER STORIES BY AN OLD SCOUT



The fellow who had succeeded in heading him off now came dashing toward him with leveled rifle. But before he could fire Young Wild West dropped him with a bullet from his revolver. Then the sorrel made a spurt.

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

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Young Wild West's Pony Express

— OR —

GETTING THE MAIL THROUGH ON TIME

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

SHOOTING FOR A PIG.

"Here you go, now! One dollar for a chance on ther fattest pig ever seen in Yaller Dust. Only a dollar, gents; step up an' get a chance. There ain't goin' to be no throwin' of dice; 's goin' to be a shootin' match, an' ther feller what makes ther best score takes ther porker. Come, now! Lay in your chances. Ther money is to go to poor Dick Rannie, what's lyin' by inches from that cough he's got. Ther pig weighs all her way from four to five hundred, an' we want to raise fifty dollars for Dick if we kin. You want a chance, young feller? That's right. It's helpin' along a good cause."

The speaker was a rough, bearded man of fifty, whose every appearance would indicate that he had been born and bred in the Wild West.

The scene was in the central part of what was then called Dakota Territory.

It was a rather warm day, and the square in front of the one-story building that had a sign on the front bearing the legend, "Axter House—Meals at all hours and liquor for sale," was pretty well filled up with a motley crowd consisting of cowboys, miners, troopers, scouts and a few Indians that were supposed to be civilized.

The attraction was a rather small pen that contained a rather large hog. Every one appeared to be very much interested in him, and the fellow who was offering chances on the big porker was doing a pretty good business.

A handsome youth of nineteen or twenty, whose form was as graceful and as perfect as that of an Apollo, had just dismounted from a spirited sorrel steed and purchased a ticket.

He was attired in a neat-fitting hunting-suit composed of buckskin breeches trimmed with red fringe, a blue silk shirt and pearl-colored sombrero with a blue cord and tassel about it.

This was no other than Young Wild West, the prince of the saddle, champion dead-shot of the West and one of the richest mine owners in all Dakota.

He had just ridden into the little town of Yellow Dust, that was situated near the northern extremity of what was called Fox Ridge, and with him were two of his partners in business and chums through thick and thin.

One was Jim Dart, a boy of about his own age, handsome and athletic, and the other was the famous Indian scout, Cheyenne Charlie, who had not long passed his thirtieth year.

Young Wild West wore his hair long and, it being of a light chestnut hue, his manly form was set off to great advantage by the curling locks that hung down over his shoulders.

Jim Dart did not wear his hair long. The scout, who was tall and as straight as an arrow, wore a dark beard that just

fitted his handsome face and gave him the appearance of a man of great judgment and coolness.

As Young Wild West handed over a dollar and took a chance on the hog that was to be competed for in a shooting match, his two friends hastened to follow his example.

They were attired similarly to him, and as they stood there before the crowd they certainly made the best appearance of any of them, as far as dress and looks went.

If it came to formidable looks, there were plenty there who could lay away over them, for some of the men literally bristled with knives and revolvers.

But our three friends were not without arms, either. The usual belt containing a brace of revolvers of the latest pattern of the times and a hunting-knife was buckled about the waist of each of them.

"Strangers, you is welcome as ther day is long," resumed the man who was taking the money for the chances. "When you hand a dollar to me you are doin' it for a good cause. Dick Rannie is on his last legs, an' we want to help him an' his family."

The sale of chances had only begun a few minutes before the arrival of our three friends, and they had not been there more than ten minutes when the whole fifty were disposed of.

The last man to buy a chance was a short, thick-set man of forty, who rode up on a coal-black horse just as the miner was calling out that there was only one left.

As the stranger paid his money and got the number, he stepped back and began to eye Young Wild West and his two partners sharply.

He was rather fancifully attired in a dark jacket of velvet, corduroy knee breeches and patent-leather boots with silver-plated spur rowels at the heels.

On his head was a soft felt hat with the crown dented in at the top, and the red leather belt about his waist had a pair of holsters attached to it, from which the shining handles of a pair of silver-mounted shooters could be seen.

The man was not without jewelry, either, for there were two diamond rings on the fingers of his left hand, a sparkler showed in his ruffled shirt front and a heavy gold chain was suspended from a pocket in his shirt to the buckle of his belt.

"Can you tell me whether this is a good place to put up or not?" he asked of Young Wild West in a low tone.

"That I could not tell you," was the reply. "I only arrived here a few minutes ago and know nothing about the town."

"Ah, a stranger here like myself, eh? Well, let's go in the place and see what it looks like, anyway. Ask your two friends to come. I can see that they are strangers here, too."

Wild looked at Charlie and Jim, and then turning to the stranger, said:

"We were just thinking of going in, so I suppose we might

as well go inside together. We, too, want to put up here for a day or two."

As the four turned to leave the crowd the man who had sold the chances called out in a loud voice:

"Gents, ther shootin' match will start at four o'clock sharp, so be on hand. There are plenty of good rifle shots in this here town, so I guess there'll be some tall shootin' done. This here affair is goin' to be a success, as sure as my name are Sol Sampson!"

The remark was made for the benefit of the strangers, it seemed, for as soon as he spoke the words, Sol Sampson stepped down from the big log he had been standing upon and made for the shanty where the Rannie family lived to turn over the money to them.

Manwhile, our three friends followed the thick-set stranger into the "Axter House," as the hotel was named, after having first tied their horses to the hitching posts that stood in a row at the side of the rough, unpainted building.

"Mine is whisky," said the stranger, rubbing his hands as though he had them in an imaginary basin and was washing them.

"I will take a temperance drink with you," answered Young Wild West.

"So will I," spoke up Jim Dart.

"Well, a drop of good liquor won't hurt me, I reckon," remarked Cheyenne Charlie.

Though he seemed a trifle surprised at what the two boys called for, the man said nothing.

When the drinks had been swallowed he put his hand in an inner pocket and pulled out a handful of cards.

He handed one to each of the three.

On the cards was inscribed:

"Percy Pearsall, Neverdie Mine, Neverdie, Col."

"Now you know who I am, gentlemen," he remarked. "I suppose you have no objection to letting me know who you are?"

"None whatever," replied the young prince of the saddle. "I am Young Wild West, and these gentlemen are my partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart. We belong in Weston, a small town in the Hills, and are interested in mining there."

"Ah! I am real glad to know you," and he shook hands with them in a very hearty manner.

But in spite of the man's apparent friendliness, there was something about him that Wild did not like.

It struck him that Percy Pearsall, as he called himself, had journeyed to the little town of Yellow Dust for some crooked purpose.

Our hero's experience had taught him always to look upon affable strangers with distrust until he found them out.

Young Wild West and his two partners had been summoned to the place by a government official who had established temporary headquarters at Fort Unity, which was located on the banks of the Missouri River about forty miles below Yellow Dust.

Wild had been asked in a communication if he would undertake the task of carrying the mails from the fort to Owl Flats, a military station and mining settlement on the Owl River a hundred miles distant.

In that section the marauding bands of Sioux Indians and outlaws made it very dangerous traveling between the two points, and that was why it was that the mail seldom got delivered from one point to another.

At either end of the hundred-mile stretch the facilities were better for the transportation of the bags, and little or no trouble was given to the carriers.

When Young Wild West received the request he promptly talked it over with his two friends, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, and the result was that he decided to undertake to form a Pony Express route between Fort Unity and Owl Flats.

The daring young prince of the saddle was offered five thousand dollars if he could succeed in establishing the route and run it without losing any of the mail for one month.

He had filled out the papers and signed them, and then forwarded them to the government official at the fort.

Then, in less than two weeks later, he and his two friends had been summoned to the fort.

They were on their way there when they rode into Yellow Dust, which was located nearly half-way between the two points of the mail route.

Wild figured on the three of them doing the task.

One of them would be at each end of the route and one at Yellow Dust continually.

It would be what is termed relay riding.

That would always leave a man and horse fresh and ready

to relieve the rider when he had traveled his part of the distance.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when the three arrived at Yellow Dust in time to take chances on the "big pig," as the miners called it.

It was the last day of May, and as the contract was to begin on the first of June, our friends must necessarily be at the fort to start in on the morrow.

When Wild told Percy Pearsall that they wanted to put up at the hotel he did not mean that they wanted to stay overnight; he simply meant that they wanted to get something to eat, so they could proceed on their journey with full stomachs.

And as they had eaten nothing since early morning, they were pretty hungry.

"I tell you what I want," said Wild, looking at the man who had been so anxious to make friends with them, "I want something to eat."

"So do I," was the quick reply. "Landlord, just get something ready in the line of a good, hearty dinner for four of us. Never mind the expense, but hurry it up."

"All right," replied the hotel-keeper. "I can give you a layout of beefsteak, bacon and eggs, coffee and hot corn muffins in just half an hour. You couldn't beat that much, could you?"

"No," laughed Jim Dart. "That is good enough. You know your business, landlord."

"I reckon that any one who knows Billy Axter will say that," was the retort, and away he went to the kitchen to give the order.

"That feller is bound to push himself ahead, I reckon," observed Cheyenne Charlie, as Pearsall moved up to the other end of the bar for a match to light the stump of a cigar he had in his mouth.

"Yes," answered Wild. "I can't say that I like him. It strikes me that he is trying to get on friendly terms with us for some purpose."

"Maybe he is a gambler," suggested Jim.

"I was thinking that way myself."

"Well, if he is he will get fooled, for we don't want to get in any game, even if we had time to stay here."

"No; I never get in a game unless I do it for the purpose of finding out something. We will simply eat our dinner, and then if they are ready to shoot for the pig we will try our hands, and then be off for Fort Unity. Charlie, you had better see to it that our horses are given a little rubbing down, and then they can be chewing their oats while we are taking in the shooting match."

The scout at once went out and turned their horses over to the care of the stableman.

"Have a fresh cigar, Mr. Pearsall," said Wild, as the thick-set man came back to them.

"Don't care if I do."

Our hero called for the best in the house and each took one.

"I will keep mine until after dinner," he said. "I always enjoy a cigar right after eating."

"Ah, I see! You are a great smoker, but no drinker."

"I smoke now and then, but never drink anything intoxicating."

"A good point, no doubt; but I don't happen to be built that way. But say! Who do you think is going to win that pig?"

"That would be a hard thing for me to say. I don't know what kind of marksmen there are in this town."

"But you know what sort of a marksman you are yourself, don't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I know what I am in that line, too. I'll just make you a friendly wager of a hundred dollars that I will come nearer to winning the pig than you. Come, now! Take me up on it, and we will give the winnings to the poor family the pig is being chanced off for."

"I'll take that bet!" exclaimed Charlie, before Wild could get a chance to speak. "I'll bet a hundred Wild will beat you."

"All right. I am glad to see that there is some sporting blood in one of you, at least. Landlord, just hold this money, will you?"

"Certainly," said the proprietor of the Axter House. "What is the bet, gentlemen?"

Pearsall explained.

Then the proprietor put the money in his wallet and went right on doing business, as though the making of the bet was nothing to speak of.

Pearsall talked on at a rattling pace until the dinner was announced.

Then the four went into the roughly furnished dining-room and sat down at the table.

It certainly was a good, wholesome meal that had been prepared for them, and they did full justice to it.

It was four o'clock when they got up to go out.

Pearsall paid the bill, and then lighting their cigars, they went outside.

A target had been put up at a distance of two hundred and fifty yards, and the men were getting ready to shoot.

The bull's-eye of the target was a black circle about the size of a doorknob, and right in the center of this was a white spot of the dimensions of a pea.

This was so small that it could not be seen at that distance, but as it was in the exact center of the bull's-eye, it was decided that the bullet that came nearest to hitting the white spot would be the winner.

The men shot in turn as they had bought the chances.

Percy Pearsall was the last man to shoot, he having bought the last chance, and Wild and his two partners were pretty near him.

There were just fifty men to participate, and only one shot apiece was to be allowed, unless there was a tie.

It was to be run off in quick order, so Sol Sampson, the manager of the shoot, said.

The marksmen now started in, firing as fast as the results could be announced.

It was not until the twentieth man had fired that the bull's-eye got touched at all, and then it was right on the edge.

The thirty-ninth man came a trifle nearer to the center, and a cheer went up from his friends.

Wild's number was forty-two, and his turn soon came.

"Here's ther last of ther white spot!" cried Cheyenne Charlie.

CHAPTER II.

THE OUTLAWS' CAVE.

In a small back room of a shanty saloon in the little town of Owl Flats on the same day that Young Wild West arrived at Yellow Dust, two men were seated drinking and smoking.

There was nothing much about them to distinguish them from the good and bad element of the place, as they looked like the average miner to be found in the rustling town.

But their conversation showed that they were not so much interested in the claim they owned as they wanted others to think.

They were of the sort who believe in accumulating money without working for it.

They were gamblers, sneak thieves, ruffians and desperadoes combined, just as the occasion required for them to show up in either of their points.

And, notwithstanding all this, they posed as honest men among those whom they wanted to be friendly with.

"I tell you, Burt," said one of them, striking his fist upon the table vehemently, "we mustn't allow this business of ourn to git nipped in the bud. It has been paying altogether too good for that. We have been doing the work and raking in the money, and the Sioux have been gittin' ther blame for it. We ain't goin' to allow our business to be disturbed, I kin tell yer!"

"Not much we ain't, Dadson; not much we ain't. What sort of a feller kin this Young Wild West be, anyway, that Captain Percy is so alarmed about him?"

"I don't know, but ther captain says he's a terror an' has got nerve an' grit enough for ten."

"An' he's goin' to undertake to run ther mail through on time for ther Government?"

"That's what Captain Percy says."

"Cap's a putty shrewd man, or he wouldn't have got hold of this."

"Well, I s'pose it are his business to know all that's goin' on."

As the man called Dadson said this, he poured out a drink from the bottle that sat on the table before them.

Burt followed his example, and then both took a drink.

"I s'pose this Young Wild West will have a whole gang to help him git ther mail through," observed the latter, smacking his lips and placing his glass back on the table.

"I don't know. That's what Captain Percy went over to Yellow Dust to-day for."

"He ought to be there now. He left afore daylight, you know."

"Yes, it's five now. He's been there some time. His horse

is a good one, you know, an' sixty miles won't hurt such an animal as that is."

"Well, it ain't likely he'll be back before a couple of days. I s'pose we won't bother ther feller what comes through with ther mail-bags ther day after to-morrow for the first."

"No. We ain't to interfere with no one until ther captain comes to give us orders. He'll know jest what to do when he comes, you know."

The two rascals kept on talking and drinking until sunset.

Then they got up, went out into the barroom and, settling their score, left the place.

They had two good-looking horses tied outside, and, mounting them, they rode off to the east.

The trail they were following ran right along the right bank of the Owl River, a small stream that flowed into the broad Missouri, a hundred miles to the east.

The two men rode at a faster gait as soon as they were outside the limits of the little town.

It was a pretty dark night, but they did not slacken speed.

When they had covered a trifle over ten miles they brought their horses down to a walk and began to act in a cautious manner.

They proceeded on for perhaps a quarter of a mile in this way, and then, as he turned his horse and started back, the man called Burt said:

"I guess ther coast is clear enough. There don't seem to be any one on ther trail to-night."

"Yes; it is safe enough to make for ther cave, I reckon," responded Dadson. "It was safe enough when we come past it, but there's nothin' like bein' perfectly sure, as ther captain says. It's his orders to act this way every time we come, so we will do it, no matter how certain we are that there ain't no one, either whites or reds, watchin' us."

Back they walked their horses for perhaps two hundred yards, and then, pausing long enough to cast a searching glance both up and down the trail, they suddenly rode into a narrow pass that a brook trickled through and emptied into the river.

Along the pebbly bottom of the brook the horses splashed until finally they came to a sloping bank that was just around a sharp turn.

Then they stepped out upon dry ground and the riders dismounted.

One of the men uttered a low whistle, which was almost instantly repeated by some one close by.

Then he whistled twice, and a silence of perhaps ten seconds followed.

The two villains waited impatiently, their hands on the bridles of the horses.

But suddenly, out of the darkness, a whispered voice exclaimed:

"Are you loyal?"

"We are!" they answered in unison.

"To whom?"

"Captain Percy Pearsall."

"Then enter."

"You was long enough about lettin' us in," growled Burt, as he led his horse into the narrow mouth of a cave. "What's ther matter with you, anyway?"

"There's a little trouble inside," was the reply. "Ther gal ther captain brought here has got out of ther place he had her fastened in, an' she's got a knife an' a revolver which she took from ther squaw what was supposed to be watchin' her. She says she won't go back in 'her prison, an' I really think she will fight."

"Well, she can't git outside, kin she? What's ther use of makin' a fuss about it?" Dadson said.

"Maybe you kin git her to put down ther shooter an' go back," answered the guard, dryly.

"I reckon I kin," was the reply.

"Well, come on in, then."

The two led their horses through a short passage and turned to the left, where the guard took charge of them and proceeded to take off the saddles and bridles.

This was the stable, and to the right was the regular entrance to an irregular shaped cave that was very roomy and full of jutting corners and alcoves.

As the newcomers entered, they saw, by the aid of a swinging lamp that hung from the center of the underground apartment, a rather startling sight.

A young girl of perhaps eighteen years of age stood in a corner with a revolver leveled at two or three men and half a dozen squaws.

The latter were all armed, but not one of them had drawn a weapon.

The girl was very pretty, and, as she stood there, her eyes flashing defiance to the crowd, she made an imposing picture, one that a person was not likely to forget for a while.

"I am going out of here," she was saying in a ringing tone as Burt and Dadson came in. "I am going out, and the man or woman who makes a move to stop me will die!"

"Ugh! Put down pistol and be good," admonished one of the squaws.

"I will put you down if you dare make a move to interfere with me!" was the quick reply. "You have no right to keep me in this place against my will, and I am going to leave."

She took a step forward, and the crowd involuntarily fell back.

They did not like the looks of the revolver in her hands. Dadson now stepped forward.

He was a quick-witted sort of a fellow, and an idea had suddenly popped into his head.

"Don't hit her with that club!" he cried suddenly, looking as though he was talking to some one behind the girl.

The ruse worked to perfection, for she lowered the weapon instantly and looked behind her.

And before she realized that she had been neatly tricked, Dadson seized her by the wrists and quickly rendered her helpless.

"You are a lot of fools to let her scare you!" he exclaimed. "I s'pose if I hadn't showed up just as I did you'd have let her gone out."

The girl now grew hysterical.

She had made a bold attempt to escape and had lost.

"Now, I guess you'll git right back to your quarters an' behave yourself," her captor resumed. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for tryin' to run away from ther captain, when he loves you so madly."

Shrieking loudly for help, the girl was borne into an alcove that had been boarded up so as to make a separate apartment of it.

But before putting her in there, Dadson made sure that she had no more weapons.

The rough door was fastened by a bar, and then one of the squaws took up her position on a stool before it.

Though Dadson was not an officer in the outlaw band—for outlaw band it certainly was that occupied the cave as a headquarters—he was much looked up to just then by those present.

Of the three men who had been in the place when the two villains entered, two of them were half-breeds and the other a white man.

Counting the guard, who was also white, there were now six men there and as many squaws, the most of whom were young and comely looking.

The latter were the wives of the outlaws, and the handsome white girl was to become the bride of the captain, so it was said by them.

The girl, whose name was Emma Michels, was a stepdaughter of the surgeon at Fort Unity.

She had been kidnapped through the aid of her stepfather, who was a villain and wanted to get some property left by her mother.

This man, who held a good position under the Government, was in league with Captain Percy Pearsall in the robbing of the mails, and from this it will be seen that he was not only a villain, but a traitor as well.

His name was John Leon—Surgeon Leon—and was deemed honest and trustworthy by his superiors.

His stepdaughter had been kidnapped with the understanding that she would be made away with, but, after he had seen what a pretty girl she was, Percy Pearsall decided to try and win her hand in marriage.

He cared nothing for the surgeon, and he had already figured it out during the three short days of the girl's captivity, that he would marry her and then treat her stepfather to a surprise some day by taking the fortune that rightfully belonged to her from him.

So it will be seen that it was a case of diamond cut diamond, and that the poor, motherless girl involved a whole lot.

Pearsall had told Emma Michels how her stepfather had bargained with him to put her out of the way, and, from the way she had been treated since her mother's death, the girl did not doubt it.

But she refused absolutely to entertain the thought of marrying the outlaw leader.

Then he had given her a week in which to make up her mind, telling her refusal to wed him meant her death.

The apartment Emma occupied in the outlaws' headquar-

ters was fitted up with no small degree of luxury, and she was allowed the best of food and attention from the Indian woman who had been designated to take charge of her.

But that was nothing to her just then.

She wanted her liberty.

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG WILD WEST WINS THE SHOOTING MATCH.

"Do you mean that?" asked Pearsall, as Cheyenne Charlie said it would be the last of the white spot in the bull's-eye when Young Wild West stepped up to take his turn at shooting for the pig.

"I certainly did mean it," retorted the scout. "I never say anything I don't mean."

"Well, I'll bet you five hundred dollars that he don't touch the white spot with a bullet."

"It's a go!"

Wild, who was ready to shoot, waited until the money had been placed in the hands of Sol Sampson, the manager of the affair.

Then he placed the butt of the rifle to his shoulder, and, taking a quick aim, fired.

There was a deathly silence for the space of a moment, and then the man who was attending the target and announcing the results called out:

"Plumb center! Ther white spot's gone!"

Instantly every eye was turned upon the handsome young deadshot.

"What did I tell you, Pearsall?" exclaimed Charlie. "I knowed jest what I was talkin' about, an' that's why I said it. There ain't a man livin' who can beat Young Wild West at shootin' with a rifle."

"It looks that way," retorted Pearsall, shrugging his shoulders, "but it might be that there are some who can hold their own with him."

"Yes; I don't doubt that."

"I might, you know."

"Well, you are a good one if you do," remarked the man who held the record up to the time Wild had fired.

It was now Jim Dart's turn.

It took some time for all those who wanted to examine the target to get through, and when they did Jim stepped up.

The boy did his level best, and succeeded in placing a bullet in the bull's-eye that touched the edge of the hole Wild had made in the center of it.

Cheyenne Charlie followed and hit on the opposite side at about the same distance from the center.

"The three best shots so far," said Sol Sampson.

The others who came before it was Percy Pearsall's turn did not succeed in getting up to the score of our three friends, and that left them still ahead of all hands, with Wild a sure winner, unless Pearsall tied him.

"Before I shoot," said the thick-set man, "I want you to plug up the hole where the white spot was. I might shoot in the same spot, and then I would not have the credit of it, you know."

"All right," answered Sampson. "I reckon no one will object to that. You are ther last man to shoot."

"I have no objection, I'm sure," spoke up our hero. "Go ahead."

Sampson chewed up a bit of paper, and, making a little ball of it, pushed it into the bullet-hole.

Then he came back and told Pearsall to go ahead and shoot. He toed the mark and placed the rifle to his shoulder.

The next instant the report rang out.

"In ther same place!" shouted the man at the target. "Ther piece of paper is gone!"

A look of triumph crossed the face of Pearsall.

"I told you that I knew how to shoot," he said to Charlie.

"Well, I reckon you do," was the reply.

"It is a tie," declared Sampson. "You have got to shoot it off."

"Now comes the opportunity to see who possesses the most nerve," said Pearsall.

"That's right," retorted Young Wild West. "Nerve is the thing that generally counts. You must never expect to get very far ahead in this world if you don't have nerve. Now, then, Mr. Pearsall, I suppose I must shoot first, as you tied me."

"Yes; I think that is proper."

"Well, here goes, then."

The bullet hole in the center had been stuffed with a ball of paper again, and our hero raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired for the second time at the target.

"He ain't lost his nerve any!" yelled the man at the target. "He hit it plumb in ther center ag'in."

At this Pearsall showed signs of being just a trifle nervous. "All right," he said.

The hole was stuffed again, and then he took his second shot. "You lose!" came the shout from the man. "You've made the hole a little bigger on ther left side, an' a piece of ther paper is still in it."

A scowl came over the brow of the defeated man when he heard this.

"I want to see the target," he exclaimed. "Don't handle it, anybody, until I see that this report is correct."

He walked away over to the target, but one look satisfied him that the report was a correct one.

"Now, you see who had ther most nerve, I reckon," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "Come, boys, I guess we have got to be movin'. It is gittin' toward six o'clock."

Wild walked over to the master of ceremonies.

"I suppose I am the winner of the pig?" he remarked.

"Yes, an' you won it by two of ther greatest shots I ever seen."

"Well, give it to Dick Rannie, with my compliments."

"Who will I tell him it was who give it to him?"

"Young Wild West."

"Ah, thank you, Young Wild West."

Our friends now went into the hotel, where Charlie collected the bet he had won from Pearsall.

Then he went over and gave the whole amount to Sol Sampson, with instructions to present it to the sick man's family.

Percy Pearsall was nowhere to be seen when the three mounted their horses and left the town.

They should have started before, but they could not resist the temptation to stay and take part in the shooting-match.

"I wonder where our friend has gone?" remarked Jim, as they rapidly left the town behind.

"I have no idea," replied Wild. "He is a fellow I do not like. He very nearly gave himself away when I beat him at shooting. I could see by the expression on his face that he was very mad over it. We must be on the lookout for Percy Pearsall, as he calls himself, for I am confident that we have not seen the last of him."

"That's my opinion, exactly!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Ther feller ain't no good, an' I'll bet on it. I won some of his money, an' I'm glad of it, too."

The three had a ride of forty miles ahead of them, and, though their horses were not any fresher than they ought to be, they expected to make the distance before daylight and have two or three good rests on the way.

One thing was in their favor—the trail was pretty level and smooth, and this helped them considerably.

They rode on at an easy pace, and the miles were gradually covered.

When perhaps fifteen miles were covered they came to a halt, and gave the horses a rest.

As all were valuable steeds, more especially Wild's sorrel, they attended to them carefully, giving them a good rubbing down to keep the stiffness out of them.

When they stopped again they had covered another fifteen miles.

The horses did not appear to be any more tired than they were when they started the last time, and just as they were thinking of going on for the last ten miles of their journey a light suddenly flashed in the bushes ahead of them.

It appeared as though it was made by a lantern, for it was moving off to the left.

They sat still in the saddle and listened.

Then they heard footsteps.

"Come on," said Wild. "We will ride over and see who it is that walks around this lonely part of the country at this hour of the night."

As the horses started forward the light suddenly disappeared.

But this was nothing more than Young Wild West had expected.

The man with the lantern was not supposed to know whether they were friends or foes.

"Hello, there!" called out Young Wild West. "Can you tell us how much further we have got to go to reach Fort Unity?"

There was no reply, so the boy urged his horse forward and rode boldly to the spot where the light had disappeared.

Then, for the first time, he saw a lonely little cabin standing back a few feet from the roadside.

It was nearly covered with vines and the branches of trees that hung down upon it.

All was in darkness, and everything was as silent as the grave.

Wild felt as though he ought to be answered, so he rode up to the door and gave a knock on it.

"Who's there?" came from within.

"Three travelers on their way to Fort Unity," he answered.

"Can you tell us how much further we have got to go?"

"About ten miles," came the answer from within. "Go on, now! I want to get to sleep."

"You could not have wanted to sleep very bad, or else you would not have been running around with a lantern so late," and with that our hero turned his horse and started away from the spot, followed by his companions.

They had not gone more than a dozen yards when a rifle-shot rang out, and Young Wild West felt a sting on his left side.

Cheyenne Charlie happened to be looking in the direction of the cabin when the shot was fired, and he saw the flash come from a little window.

In the twinkling of an eye he was blazing away at the window with his revolver.

The first shot he let go caused a sharp cry of pain to come from the window, which showed that he had hit the fellow who had fired at them.

"Whew!" exclaimed Wild, as he pressed his hand to his side and found blood. "I guess I got touched that time."

"Did the bullet go in?" Jim asked, anxiously, as they rode behind a group of trees and came to a halt.

"No; I guess not. Ah! it just grazed me close enough to cut my clothing and break the skin. Spitfire stepped into a rut just as the shot was fired, and that was the means of saving my life."

"Well, what are we going to do?"

"Do!" spoke up Charlie. "Why, raid that cabin, an' either kill or capture them that's in it. It is a pretty bad man who would fire a shot like that. I winged ther feller who done it, but I guess I didn't hurt him much. He hollered more from surprise than anything else. Here goes."

The scout had unslung his rifle, and, placing it to his shoulder, he began firing at the windows in the cabin.

No answering shots came, so when he had fired half a dozen times our hero told him to desist.

"Let them alone for to-night," he said. "I am satisfied that there is more than one man in the cabin. But we will investigate later. This is on the line of the Pony Express route, you know. We will all pass that cabin many times during the next month."

"That's right," observed Jim. "Come on, Charlie. We will see how it looks to-morrow in the daylight."

The scout grumblingly assented, for it was not exactly his wish to leave the place till the coward who had shot at Wild had been punished.

Wild's wound was nothing more than a scratch, as the heat from the bullet had stung him more than anything else.

When they had covered about half a mile he halted and allowed Jim to apply a piece of plaster to it; then he was ready to proceed.

It was a little past one when the three rode into the settlement near the fort.

There was no hotel there, so they headed straight for the barracks.

After no little waiting they were at length received and given places to turn in for the night.

The officer in charge had been expecting their arrival, so when they had satisfied him who they were it was all right.

They rose at the sound of the bugle in the morning, and after eating with the officers, the U. S. Mail official sent for them.

"So you are here on time, I see," he observed, as he shook the hand of Young Wild West.

"Yes, colonel; I always make it a point to do as I agree to. But I came near to not getting here, for all that."

"Why, how is that?" and the official looked surprised.

"I was shot at about ten miles from here. Some one in a little cabin, that stands at the side of the trail and is almost concealed from view by overhanging vines, sent a bullet after us as we passed. It was meant for my heart, I guess, but my horse happened to step in a rut just as the shot was fired, and the bullet merely grazed my skin. See! here is where it cut my shirt."

"That is rather odd," remarked the colonel, when he had made an examination. "Have you any idea how it was that you came to be fired upon?"

"Nothing occurred to make any one fire at us," and then the boy told just what happened.

"Well, I suppose you are used to being shot at, or you would not have taken the contract to run the mail through to Owl Flats for a month. I think you have got a rather tough job ahead of you, but, as you have signed the contract, I suppose you will try it, anyhow?"

"Oh, yes. I will try it; and I will succeed, too. The mail goes over twice a week, and comes back twice, according to the contract, and as there are three of us to do it, we will get it through on time."

"Yes; you can do it easy enough if you are not interrupted by the thieving Sioux. We are doing our best to catch them, so you will be protected considerably by the soldiers. It was my idea about offering the five thousand dollars to the person who could establish a route between here and Owl Flats, and run it one month without losing any of the mail. In addition to that sum, which is put up as a sort of a prize, you will receive sixty dollars per month as your regular pay, or pro rata, if you fail to hold the job a month."

"Very well; when will the mail be ready to start with?"

"At one o'clock."

"Very well."

"You are not going to back out, then?" asked the colonel.

"Certainly not."

"Good! That settles it, then."

CHAPTER IV.

WILD RIDES OVER TO OWL FLATS.

Wild, Charlie and Jim were then called upon to sign some more documents, which they did, after first reading them over carefully.

"There is a great deal of 'red tape' about this business, I'll admit," observed the colonel, who had been appointed by the authorities at Washington to perfect that portion of the mail route. "But it is strict necessity, as it is the only way to run things straight."

"I don't mind signing papers," retorted Wild. "But I always do make it a point to read over carefully what is on a document before I sign it. Everybody should do this, I think."

"You are right on that point. Many a man has signed his last dollar away, not knowing it. But what you have signed here is simply that if you fulfill your contract and get the mails through on time for one month you are to receive five thousand dollars as a prize; otherwise you will only receive pay at the rate of sixty dollars a month, and will have to pay your help out of your own pocket."

"I understand it perfectly," and Young Wild West smiled as he turned to his two partners.

"Boys," he added, a moment later, "if we make a miss of it, we will make rather poor wages, won't we?"

"Well, if I understand aright, you have large mining interests in the Black Hills, and that you only accepted the proposition to come here, to show that you can do a thing when you once attempt it?"

"That's just it, exactly!" exclaimed our hero. "I have signed this contract, and now I am going to put it through."

"And if you do, you will do a whole lot that could not be accomplished before. Why, there has been at least twenty thousand dollars stolen from the mail-bags in the past seven months, and three men have lost their lives."

This assertion did not make our friends feel the least bit uneasy.

They were well used to danger of all sorts, and felt quite equal to the task of running the Pony Express through from the Fort to Owl Flats.

After all arrangements were made they went out to the stable where their horses were, and found them in the best of condition.

Well used to long journeys, the animals were as fresh as ever.

"Now," said Wild, "we may as well settle as to how we are going to run this thing. One of us has got to remain here, one has got to stop at Yellow Dust, and the other must ride on to Owl Flats. It is now nine o'clock, so I would suggest that the one who will have to push on to Owl Flats, starts right away, so his horse will have a chance to rest before he sets out from that place with the mail. We had better draw lots to see who will take the places."

"Good," answered Charlie, picking up three straws. "Now, I'll break these into three different lengths. The one who draws the short one will stay here to take the mail-bags at one o'clock; he who draws the next to the shortest will ride on to Yellow Dust with the one who goes out with the

mail. Then, whichever one gets the long straw will go right away for Owl Flats, and wait there till the mail is brought in. How's that suit you?"

"First rate," replied Wild.

"It couldn't be fairer," said Jim. "Though I don't care how it turns out."

Charlie arranged the straws where they could not see him, and when he was ready he came over and held out the ends of them.

Jim drew first, but as he did not know the exact length of the straws, he was not sure which one he had.

Wild came next, and he got one that was longer than Jim's.

Of course, the remaining one belonged to Charlie, and when he held it up it was found to be the shortest of the three.

"That settles it," exclaimed Wild. "I have got to push on to Owl Flats."

"And I have got to stop at Yellow Dust," added Jim.

"That gives me the privilege of carryin' the first mail-bags from here, then," remarked the scout. "Well, I am satisfied, if you fellows are."

"We are all satisfied, I guess," answered Wild, and then he went right to work saddling his horse.

In a few minutes he was ready to start, so he went to the temporary office of the colonel, and told him how they had arranged things.

It being satisfactory, he waved his hand to his partners, and rode away.

The Pony Express route had now opened.

Wild rode along at an easy gait till he came within about a mile of the cabin at the side of the trail, where he had been shot at.

Then he brought the sorrel down to a walk.

He had just done this when he perceived a horseman riding slowly toward him.

As the horseman drew nearer he saw that he wore the uniform of a surgeon in the army.

"Good-morning, surgeon," said Young Wild West, as the rider brought his horse to a halt. "You belong to the Fort, I suppose?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I presume you are the young fellow who has contracted to put the mail through?"

"Yes, sir; that is exactly who I am."

"Your name is Young Wild West?"

"That's right."

"Well, I wish you luck in your undertaking. Good-morning!"

"Good-morning," answered our hero, and then as the surgeon rode on he nodded to himself.

"There is something wrong about that man, I'll wager," he muttered.

The boy did not like the looks of the surgeon, and when he once grew suspicious of a man he was generally right in his belief.

As the boy came in sight of the lone cabin he was surprised to see an old man sitting on a bench in front of the door whittling a stick.

"Mornin', young feller," said the old man, as he rode up.

"Good-morning, my friend," retorted Wild, bringing his horse to a halt. "You appear to be more civil than you were last night."

"What do you mean by that?" and the man showed signs of genuine surprise.

"You don't know anything about what happened here last night, then?"

"I reckon I don't, since I wasn't here. I only rode over from Yellow Dust this mornin'. I ain't been back half an hour yet. You are the young feller they call Young Wild West, ain't yer?"

"Yes," answered our hero, rather puzzled, for he felt that the old man was speaking the truth.

"An' you won the pig in the shootin' match over there yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"I know all about it. I was there and seen it all. I had a chance on the pig myself, but my shootin' wasn't nowhere alongside of yours and that feller what tied you."

"When did you see the man who tied me, last?"

"I ain't seen him since right after the shootin' match."

"He was not at Yellow Dust when you left this morning, then?"

"No. Leastwise, I didn't see anything of him."

"Well, good-morning. I've got a long ride ahead of me."

"Good-mornin', Young Wild West."

Wild was just about to ride on, when he thought of something.

"Who shot your windows out?" he asked, reining in his horse again.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old fellow, "I've been wonderin' who done it myself. You are ther second one to ask me that within ten minutes. I reckon that one or both of you knows somethin' about it."

"Who asked you besides myself?"

"Surgeon Leon from ther fort."

"He just left you a few minutes ago, didn't he?"

"Yes. But, say! Do you know anythin' about my winders bein' shot out?"

"Yes; I know something about it. A friend of mine did it somewhere around twelve o'clock last night."

"He did, hey?" and the old man showed signs of anger. "Well, I reckon he'll pay for ther damage he done, then. There's a whole lot of blood in the house, too. I knowed some one was in there, an' I made up my mind that either you or ther surgeon knowed somethin' about it by ther way you talked. But I was waitin' for you to give yourselves away."

"Well, see here, my friend. I'll tell you all about it, if you are sure you don't know."

"I don't know."

"Well, I will tell you, then," and Wild did tell him just what happened the night before when he passed that way in the company of Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart.

"Some one was runnin' around with a lantern, hey?" gasped the old fellow. "An' some one shot at you from the house, did they? Well, I'd jest give five dollars to know who it was that kin git in an' out of my shanty as they feel like it, when I'm away. This ain't ther first time it has happened, either. Some one was in here ther other night, when ther gal from ther fort went away an' aint been seen since. It's gittin' to be a putty how-de-do that a feller can't go away from his house for a few hours, without havin' some one to come along an' upset things for him! Young Wild West, I believe jest what you have told me, an' I wish you'd try an' find out who it is that's comin' around here."

"Haven't you any idea at all?" asked our hero.

"Ther only one I kin lay it to is Surgeon Leon, though I wouldn't like him to hear that I said so."

"Well, I will ride back and forth past here every now and then for the next month, and if you will keep an eye on the surgeon and the man who tied me at the shooting match, and tell me what they are doing when you happen to see them, I'll try and find out for you."

"You will?"

"Yes; you get a little evidence that they are not exactly what they make out to be, and I'll do the rest. You said a girl had disappeared from the fort, didn't you?"

"Yes; she's a stepdarter of ther surgeon, an' a mighty putty gal she is, too. He's offered a big reward for her return, but I don't think he seems to be so awful anxious about her, for all that."

Young Wild West was much interested in what the old man said.

He now began to think that Surgeon Leon was a very suspicious character, and that he would bear considerable watching.

He talked with the hermit for ten minutes longer, and learned enough to make him believe that the surgeon knew something about the disappearance of his stepdaughter.

He also learned that the old fellow's name was Gunnison, and that he had built the cabin and had lived there alone ever since the fort had been established ten miles beyond, on the bank of the Missouri.

"That old fellow has told me nothing but the truth," he mused, as he rode away. "There is something peculiar about me being shot at last night. It looks as though the robbers of the mail have begun their work to keep me from going through. But I will defeat them. I am going to run this Pony Express for one month if I have to wade through blood!"

He kept on riding, and reached Yellow Dust at one o'clock.

He stopped at the same place he had dined the day before with his partners and Percy Pearsall.

After he had seen to putting up his horse he walked into the barroom and ordered dinner.

When it was ready he stepped inside, and was surprised to see Pearsall sitting at the table.

The man's left arm was bandaged at the wrist, and Wild noticed that he showed signs of being uneasy when he took a seat opposite him.

"How are you, Mr. Pearsall?" he observed pleasantly.

"Pretty well, Mr. West," was the reply. "I met with a little accident this morning. I cut my wrist."

"Ah! that is too bad."

After that neither had much to say, but Wild was doing considerable thinking as he ate his dinner.

Pearsall got up and excused himself before Wild was through, and that was the last he saw of him that day.

After dinner our hero called the landlord of the place, and arranged for the relay riders to put up there during the month.

One of them would be there all the time, so he got the rate reduced.

It was a trifle after two when he set out for the sixty-mile ride to Owl Flats.

Spitfire was a tough horse, and he hoped to make the distance before it grew very late in the night.

One thing, the road was a pretty good one.

It ran parallel with the Owl River, some places being right on the bank of it.

Wild allowed the spirited sorrel to travel at his own gait, and the miles rapidly slipped by.

Just before darkness set in he met a detachment of eight cavalymen who were doing patrol duty on the trail.

He halted, and had a talk with them, and when they learned that he was the one who had contracted to carry the mail for a month, they showed much interest in him.

"We will help you all we can," said the lieutenant in command. "But I am afraid that you and your friends will have a hard time of it. There has been no mail through in over a week now, and that was run by a stage-coach line, which has now gone out of business, on account of losing three men, and the business being poor in the line of passengers."

"Well, you help me all you can, and I guess we will get through all right," replied Wild. "This Pony Express will be something new, and we will surprise these mail robbers. My two partners are very nery fellows, and they can generally tell a good man from a bad one at the first sight. They know how to shoot straight, too, and have good horses."

"I wish you would give me your name, and also the names of your partners, together with a description of them," said the lieutenant.

Young Wild West did so, and one of the men, who had heard of him, asked to shake his hand.

"Lieutenant," he remarked, "if any one can get the mail through, Young Wild West can. I have heard enough of him to know that he seldom fails in anything he undertakes."

"You mustn't flatter me," laughed Wild.

"I am not given to making flattering remarks," was the earnest reply. "I mean what I say, and I hope you will have the best of luck in this."

Our hero went on and, without meeting any one else, got into the town of Owl Flats, hungry and tired, at a little after nine in the evening.

Acting on the advice of the lieutenant, he put up at the "Owl House," which had the best accommodations to be found in the place.

The proprietor was a genial sort of a fellow, named Harvey, and Wild made up his mind then and there that he would have no trouble in getting along with him.

CHAPTER V.

TWICE HELD UP AND A WINNER.

The next morning Young Wild West went over to the post-office and showed his credentials to the postmaster, who was more than pleased to learn that there was a prospect of the mail going through regularly.

"It has been very uncertain, ever since the route was first established," he said. "There is a lot of valuable mail that goes this way, too. The miners in this section and the mining districts to the north are sending money to their homes in the East weekly, and the Government has decided to take hold of the matter and protect them. Already nearly all the post-offices have been made registered ones, but that does not insure the delivery of a letter or package; it simply proves that a letter or parcel has been received if the receipt comes back signed. It is going to cost the Government a big pile of moeny to get things running right out West, I can tell you!"

"I believe that," answered Wild. "Just as long as there are things to tempt the rascally men who seem so common in these parts, just so long will villainy thrive, unless, of course, the thieves are put to rout. I have undertaken to run the mail through on time for a month, and I will guarantee that if I am bothered by any of the mail robbers during that time there will be a few less when my contract expires."

"I like to hear you talk that way, Mr. West. I see by this document you brought me that the first mail from here will leave to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"Yes; that will give me time to meet one of my partners at Yellow Dust, who will take the bags and go on through to the Fort. The other will be here before I start, and I will rest at Yellow Dust till he comes back, and then go on to the Fort. That is the way we will do it to begin with, but we want to fix it so one of us is at each of the three places continually, and arrange it so the hundred miles can be divided up equally during the week."

"Well, I suppose you can do that all right."

"Oh, yes; we can arrange it so that we all do the same amount of work."

"You can change off on the days that you have the short run between the Fort and Yellow Dust."

"Oh, we will have plenty chance to rest, unless the outlaws get after us so hot that they put us out of business."

"Well, I hope they don't do that," said the postmaster, speaking sincerely, for it was to his interest that the mail route should be safe.

Wild's horse had had the best of care, and the spirited animal was as frisky as a kitten when he went to saddle and bridle him a few minutes before ten.

It was time that Jim Dart showed up, and as Wild mounted and rode over to the post-office to get the mail-bags, he began to grow just a trifle anxious.

But a minute or two later a cloud of dust showed in the distance, and then one of the miners in the waiting crowd that had gathered around the office to see the mail come in and go out, shouted:

"Here comes the Pony Express with the mail! Now, boys, we'll git some word from home!"

It was Jim Dart, sure enough.

He was riding hard, as though he was aware that he was late.

When he brought his foaming horse to a halt a cheer went up from the crowd.

Jim took off his hat and bowed, and then, quickly dismounting, delivered the mail-bags to the postmaster.

"So you got through all right, eh, Jim?" Wild observed a minute later, as he was ready to start.

"Yes. I had company all the way from Yellow Dust. That kept me from riding as hard as I wished to."

"Who came over with you?"

"Percy Pearsall."

"Where is he now?"

"He stopped about five miles below here. There were three prospectors there whom he said were his friends. He said he would be here a little later."

There was no further time to talk now, as the postmaster came out with the mail.

The bags were swung over the sorrel's back, before and behind the saddle, and buckled to it.

Then, with a wave of his hand, Young Wild West galloped off on his Pony Express route.

"Jim had a little the worst of it, I guess," he thought, as he rode along. "We have got to arrange it so we only ride in the daylight, if it can be done. The night is the time for the robbers to attack us, anyway."

The morning was a fair one, and the breeze that came from the mountains was bracing.

Wild was expecting to meet Percy Pearsall, but when he had covered about seven miles he came to the conclusion that he must have taken another route.

But at that very moment he heard the clatter of hoofs from behind him, and, turning, he beheld three villainous men pursuing him, with their rifles to their shoulders ready to fire.

"Ah!" he muttered, "so soon? On, Spitfire! If those fellows are after these mail-bags they will never get them this trip."

The noble horse burst into a swift gallop, and just then another horseman showed up from another direction.

He was riding to head off the young Pony Express rider, and Wild saw at a glance that he was quite apt to do it, if his horse held out at its present gait.

But he resolved to give him a race.

Those behind him were not gaining a particle, and presently one of them fired a shot.

The bullet whistled harmlessly over Wild's head, but he did not make a move to return it just then.

He was keeping his eye on the man who was trying to head him off.

He was the only dangerous one in the lot.

Nearer and nearer they came together, and two more shots were fired at the brave boy from behind.

There would have to be something done in less than ten seconds if the prince of the saddle meant to get through with the mail-bags.

The fellow who had succeeded in heading him off now came dashing toward him with leveled rifle.

But before he could fire Young Wild West dropped him with a bullet from his revolver.

Then the sorrel made a spurt.

With the main foe out of the way, the boy now saw the way clear.

But as those behind kept on firing he turned in the saddle and laid another man low.

Then the other two dropped back and gave up the chase.

"Tally one for Young Wild West's Pony Express!" said Wild, with a grim smile. "There are two less of them to hold up the mail now."

When he had covered about four miles he brought his horse down to a slower pace, as he felt that there was no further danger from the villains who had attacked him.

When he was within ten miles of the town of Yellow Dust he suddenly came upon a band of Indians.

Though they were peaceful ones, they stopped him and asked for firewater.

"I have no firewater," Wild said to them. "I don't drink such stuff, and never carry it with me."

"Ugh!" grunted the chief, who was with them. "Paleface boy tell heap big lie."

"See here, redskin!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "It strikes me that you are looking for trouble. Now, you can see that I am carrying the mail for the Great Father at Washington, so you had better let me go on about my business. If you don't, the soldiers will be after you."

There was about a dozen of them, and they all seemed to be in the humor to do some mischief.

"If paleface boy no got firewater, we take bags," said the chief.

The Indians quickly surrounded Wild as this remark was made, and he saw that there was only one alternative, and that was to fight.

As quick as a flash he placed the bridle rein in his teeth, and whipped out his brace of revolvers.

"Stand back, you red fiends!" he cried. "Lay your hands on those mail-bags and I will shoot!"

This abashed them somewhat, but they were not in the mood to give us so easily.

Wild decided to make a break for it.

He pressed his heels against the flanks of his horse, and then away dashed the spirited sorrel.

The Indians were scattered right and left by the move, but one of them recovered and, being more reckless than the others, began to shoot at the boy with his revolver.

Two bullets whistled past his head dangerously close, and then Wild thought it time to fire.

He sent two shots at them, dropping a couple of them from their horses wounded, but not dangerously.

That settled them, for instead of giving pursuit they realized that they had attacked an employee of the Government, and became frightened.

Wild rode into Yellow Dust ahead of time, and found Cheyenne Charlie waiting for him with his horse saddled.

The mail bags were quickly transferred, and then the scout rode away upon the forty miles to Fort Unity.

So quickly was the transfer made, that they barely had time to exchange greetings.

Wild turned his horse over to the care of the stableman, and then went into the hotel.

He was tired and hungry, for riding the way he had was no play.

A good wash, and he was ready to sit down to a hearty meal.

He took his time about eating, and when he had finished he went out into the barroom and purchased a cigar.

He had just lighted it, and was puffing away contentedly, when half a dozen soldiers from the Fort came in.

Among them was Surgeon Leon.

"Hello, Young Wild West!" the latter called out. "How are you making out with your Pony Express?"

"First-rate," retorted Wild.

"Haven't been held up, have you?"

"Yes; only twice to-day."

"Lost the mail, did you?" and the surgeon's face was crossed by a look of satisfaction.

"Oh, no!" answered the young prince of the saddle, not failing to notice the look. "I brought the mail through all

right. You must have met my partner, if you came from the fort just now."

"We didn't come that way," and the man showed faint signs of being disappointed. "How did you make out with the ones who held you up? They were Indians, I suppose?"

"One lot was; the others were white men."

"And you got away from them all?"

"Yes. I shot two out of each crowd, though, to do it."

The surgeon gave a start.

"Is that so?" he questioned. "Who were the white men? Had you ever seen them before?"

"I never saw them before, to my knowledge."

"Well, I am glad you got away from them. I have been out scouring the country for my missing daughter. I begin to think that she was not kidnaped, after all, and that she ran away with some fellow. I wish you would help me find her."

"Well, if you really want me to help you, I will. Just give me the facts of the case."

At this juncture who should come in but old Gunnison, the hermit.

"Give me a pint of ther cheapest lickker you've got," he said, walking up to the bar.

"Hello, old man!" cried the surgeon, who had been drinking just enough to make him act a little reckless. "Come and have a drink with me. You, too, Young Wild West."

As these words were spoken the hermit turned and saw both Wild and the surgeon.

"Jest ther two I wanted to see!" he cried, stepping up. "Now, surgeon, an' Young Wild West, which of you was it that was in my cabin ther night afore last?"

The face of the surgeon turned red at this, but Wild only smiled.

"I was not inside your house, Mr. Gunnison," our hero replied. "I was shot at by some one who was inside, though. Just ask the surgeon if he was there when the shot was fired."

At this the surgeon sprang toward Wild, and aimed a blow at his face with his fist.

"What do you mean by an insinuation like that, Young Wild West? Take that!"

Again he struck at the boy, but missed him by a good way.

Then Wild caught hold of his nose and gave it a twist.

"Keep cool, surgeon, or you will get in trouble," he said, mildly.

"You said I was in this man's house when you was shot at, and I say that you lie!"

"Keep cool, I tell you. I didn't say anything of the kind. I simply told him to ask you if you were there."

"That's insinuating it, and I demand satisfaction for it. You have either got to apologize or fight me with swords."

The hermit was just about to say something, but Wild motioned him to keep quiet.

Then one of the cavalymen, with the surgeon, took it up for him, and began saying insulting things to Wild.

"I advise you to keep cool, too," our hero said. "This is no quarrel of yours. I simply made a remark that was rather hasty, perhaps, but I won't take it back, for I believe the shoe fits the man to perfection. It is not my business to fight him with swords, as he is an old man, and probably not my equal in that line. I insinuated that he was in the cabin of Gunnison when I was shot at the night before last, and I believe it, too. I also think I know who was with him. But Mr. Gunnison seems to want to say something, so I will give him the chance."

"Well," spoke up the hermit, "whoever it was in my house left this there when he went away," and he held up a morocco spectacle case.

Wild took it from him, and saw that the initials on it were "J. L."

"Where did you get that?" cried the surgeon, excitedly, and he made a grab for the case.

CHAPTER VI.

EMMA MICHEL'S WORKS TO ESCAPE.

When Percy Pearsall parted company with Jim Dart, he did so simply for the purpose of going to his snug retreat, which was but a short distance away.

The prospectors Jim saw were no friends of Pearsall, neither did he know them.

But as the villain rode over with the boy, he must have some excuse to leave him before getting into the town.

The captain of the outlaws soon made his way to the cave, as Burt and Dadson had the day before.

When he got inside he found all his six men present.

They saluted him as he came in, and noticing that his wrist was bandaged, one of them said:

"What's ther matter, cap—been in a scrimmage?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Young Wild West, or one of his friends, did that."

"Is that a fact, cap?"

"Yes."

"An' what did you do to Young Wild West?"

"I came within an ace of dropping him from the saddle just before the bullet was fired that winged me."

"You missed him, then?"

"It was just my luck, I suppose. But we will get a chance at him in less than an hour from now. He is in Owl Flats, and will start out with the mail pretty soon."

This news surprised the outlaws not a little, but it was pleasing to them, for all that.

"So ther Pony Express route is started, then?" spoke up Dodson, the man who had succeeded in getting the best of the girl captive when she was about to escape from the cave.

"Yes; I rode over with the young fellow who brought the first mail over from the fort. I met him at Yellow Dust and rode along with him for company."

"Ther dickens you say!" exclaimed Dodson.

"You didn't try to hold ther feller up then?" questioned Burt.

"No. That would have been nonsense. There is more valuable mail that goes in the other direction. When Young Wild West comes along we will relieve him of the mail bags, and teach him that it is not always the thing to be too smart. He has declared that he will run the mail on time for a month, and has also signed a contract to that effect. He even guarantees to weed out the outlaws and reds who try to stop him from running his route. Now, it is for us to nip his big undertaking in the bud. He will leave as soon as the boy I rode over with reaches the postoffice. I think four will be enough to take care of Young Wild West, and the mail bags, too."

"I reckon so."

The men seemed to be delighted at the prospect of holding up the Pony Express rider, and they began cleaning and examining their weapons to have them ready for use.

"How is the young lady?" questioned Pearsall, as he started for the tiny cascade that trickled in one corner of the big cave.

"She's about the same, I reckon," answered the man, whose Indian wife was in charge of her.

"She come mighty nigh gittin' away, cap," spoke up Dadson, who was anxious to let the captain know what he had done, and thus gain favor.

"Came near getting away!" echoed the villain. "What do you mean?"

Dadson then related the occurrence.

He did not cast any reflections on the way the rest had acted, but tried to impress it on the mind of the leader that he was something above the average man, when it came to thinking and acting quickly.

Pearsall commended the action of Dadson, and then, when he had treated himself to a good wash and had combed his hair, he headed for the apartment the girl was confined in.

Instead of taking the bar from the door and walking right in, he gave a gentle knock.

There was no answer from within, so he repeated it.

And then, there being no response, he walked in.

He found the girl standing in the center of the little apartment.

Her eyes were red from weeping, and the rest of her face was pale.

She showed every sign of worryment and suffering.

"Good-morning, Miss Michels," he said, politely.

"Have you come to give me my liberty?" she asked, looking him in the eye, fearlessly.

"You can have your liberty any time you want it," Pearsall answered. "Become my bride, and we will hie away to Colorado and live in luxury. I own a good-paying silver mine there, and am able to give you everything you desire. Then, when that scoundrel of a step-father of yours walks into his own trap we will put the law on him, and you will get the fortune he has bargained to kill you to get hold of."

"You talk very nice, Mr. Pearsall," Emma Michels replied. "Were it not that you had bargained with my step-father to put me out of the way, and also threatened to do it, unless I became your wife, I might listen to what you say. But

as it is, I detest you—I hate you! I will die before I become your wife! Now, then, do your worst!”

“Be it so, then,” he retorted, hotly. “I will give you the balance of the week, though, to change your mind in. If you have not decided by that time to become my wife, you shall die. I have sworn it, and always keep my word!”

“And you will find that I can die like a true woman!”

“Die you will, as surely as the sun rises and sets. It may be that you have given your heart to another. If so, do not hope to ever see him again. You are to be my wife, or no one’s!”

“I will be the bride of death!” she answered, dramatically.

Pearsall stared hard at her for a moment, as though he thought she might be losing her reason.

Then without another word he left the room.

As soon as he was gone a gleam of satisfaction shone from the girl’s eyes.

“Villain!” she exclaimed, under her breath. “I will cheat both you and my stepfather. Before the week is up I will be out of here. All that is required of me now is to keep up my courage and work away at the hole I have started to dig.”

As she expressed herself thus she turned to some drapery at the side of the apartment and, pulling it aside, disclosed an opening between two rocks.

While outside in the main cave she had noticed that the place she had been confined in was on the side of the cave that the light came through.

That made her think that she might possibly dig her way out, though she did not stop to consider the cave might be lined with solid rock.

Instead of being disheartened at being seized and placed back in the apartment, she became imbued with a stronger desire to escape than ever.

She had found a soft spot between the two rocks, and with the table knife, that had been left in the place by the squaw, she dug into it.

The heavy draperies would conceal her work when any one came in, so a great hope arose in her breast.

Once out of the cave, the brave girl would make for the nearest town or settlement, and ask protection.

Then she would tell her story, and the robber band might be broken up.

Also, her stepfather would be punished for bargaining to have her put out of the way.

There was a dashing young soldier at the fort, who had often smiled upon Emma, and she was more than interested in him.

Though but slightly acquainted with him, she thought more about him since she had been in captivity than any other human being.

The soldier’s name was David Lansing, and though but a private, had hopes of winning the affections of the surgeon’s stepdaughter.

Emma was thinking of the dashing young cavalryman as she dug into the yielding dirt, and rapidly enlarged the opening.

She knew he was stationed at Owl Flats for the present, and as she had been to that town once, she judged the distance, and came to the conclusion that she was not so very far from it now.

It had been dark when she was taken into the cave, but she knew the way to the road for all that.

Not being one of the sort who are given to fainting at the first sign of danger, Emma Michels stood some show of escaping from the cave of the robbers.

For two days she spent her time in digging her way to freedom, eating the meals that were brought to her to keep up her strength.

On the night following she suddenly found herself looking out on a patch of moonlight!

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE HOTEL IN YELLOW DUST.

“Ah!” exclaimed Young Wild West, as the surgeon made a grab for the spectacle case. “So it is yours, is it?”

“Yes; it is mine,” was the reply. “Hand it over, or I will run you through with my sword!”

Instead of complying with the demand, Wild thrust the case in his pocket.

As he did this the angered doctor drew his sword and made a vicious attempt to run the boy through the body.

But the young prince of the saddle was altogether too active to allow anything like that to happen.

He stepped nimbly aside, and seizing the hilt of the sword that hung to the belt of the nearest cavalryman, he drew it, and prepared to defend himself.

And, strange as it may seem, the cavalryman did not try to keep him from taking the weapon.

He simply stepped back out of the way, while the fellow who had taken the part of the surgeon looked angrily at him.

“What did you allow the boy to take your sword for, Lansing?” he cried.

“I believe in fair play,” was the calm rejoinder.

“You do, eh? Well, take that, then!”

The fellow had been drinking, and losing control of himself, he dealt the young man a blow with the flat of his sword that caused him to stagger.

Then the two grappled.

Meanwhile, Young Wild West was at it in earnest with the surgeon.

The latter was an excellent swordsman, and Wild had never fought with such a weapon before.

But that made little difference to the boy; he had the strength and courage, and that meant a whole lot.

In spite of the fact that he was a novice, he soon began to force his elderly foe backward.

Our hero was watching everything that was going on in the room. He saw that the rest of the cavalymen had pitched upon the man he had seized the sword from, and were administering a sound beating to him.

Wild resolved to help the fellow.

So, with a quick move he disarmed the surgeon, cutting his hand pretty badly as he did so.

Then he rushed at the cowards who were so intent upon beating one of their number.

Spat! Spat! Spat!

His clenched fists began to land upon the faces of the cavalymen.

One fell sprawling on his back, and two more went staggering across the room.

“Fair play, you cowards!” cried Young Wild West, in a ringing tone.

At this the young man called Lansing got a show, and he went at them hot and heavy.

Wild kept right at his side, and in less than two minutes all of them were lying or sitting on the floor of the barroom, the surgeon included.

One of them drew a pistol, and was going to shoot at Wild, but the boy caught him in time and kicked the weapon from his hand.

“Don’t make a mistake, now, and go to shooting,” he said. “If you do, I will surely drop you. You are the worst set of cowards I ever met, and it shall be my duty to report you when I ride over to the fort.”

This had a wonderful effect on them all.

“Let it drop, won’t you?” said one. “We was drunk, an’ didn’t know what we was doin’.”

“I hope you will reconsider your determination, Young Wild West,” remarked the surgeon, in a very humble tone. “I was the cause of all the trouble, I suppose, and I am willing to apologize for anything I did or said.”

“An apology is not needed from you, sir,” retorted Wild. “For the sake of these fellows, who now seem to realize that they have made fools of themselves, I won’t report the matter. But, remember, it is not for your sake. You were in the cabin when the shot was fired at me, and you were also close by the fellow who got shot in the wrist when my partner fired at the windows. I was not positive of this at first, but I am now.”

“Well, I shall prove to you that I was at my quarters in the barracks at the time,” said the surgeon, with a very white face. “You are very hot-headed, Young Wild West, and you are badly mistaken in this.”

“Let it drop at that for the present, then,” retorted Wild, with a frown. “Surgeon, I have promised to help find your daughter for you, and I will keep my word. In the meantime, you had better be cautious how you act. I am here to run the mail through on time, and all the outlaws and bad Indians, together with the traitors they have to help them, will not stop me. I always make it a point to do a thing when I once undertake it.”

Wild now handed the sword back to the man he had taken it from.

The cavalryman was looking at him admiringly when he did so, and he bowed his thanks for the assistance rendered him.

"Now, can't we all have a drink and let this matter drop?" asked the surgeon.

"Yes," answered Young Wild West. "Here is your case," and he handed it over.

"Thank you."

At this the old hermit, who had been standing in a corner of the room during all the excitement, stepped forward.

He was just about to address Surgeon Leon, when Wild caught his eye.

The glance he gave him meant for him to be silent, and he did so.

The old fellow had learned to put a great deal of faith in Wild.

Then the surgeon began spending his money lavishly, and the affair soon blew over, as far as the majority of them were concerned, anyway.

A little later Wild got a chance to talk in private to the man who had befriended him by allowing him to take his sword from its scabbard.

He learned that his name was David Lansing, and that he was very much interested in the disappearance of the stepdaughter of the surgeon.

"I have an idea where she is," he said. "There is a man named Percy Pearsall, who lives over in Owl Flats somewhere. He is in love with her, I am sure, for I heard the surgeon say so once. I have an idea that Pearsall is a scoundrel, and that he has carried Emma Michels off, with the assistance of her stepfather."

"And I have that same idea," replied our hero.

"I have been searching for the girl for two or three days, off and on, and to-day, while riding this way from Owl Flats, I met these fellows from the fort, who declared that they were looking for her also. I thought that they acted as though they did not expect to find her, though, especially her stepfather."

"Stepfathers are liable to be mean sometimes."

"Yes; especially when they would be benefited if the child was out of the way."

"And that is the way it is in this case."

"Yes; I believe so."

"Well, Lansing, I will help you find her. I will do all I can when I ride back to Owl Flats. You are stationed there, are you not?"

"Yes; for the present."

"Well, be on the lookout for me the next time I come in with the mail."

"I will."

A few minutes later Lansing joined the detachment who were doing patrol duty on the Pony Express route, and rode on back toward Owl Flats.

The surgeon and the others from the fort remained at the hotel drinking and carousing until late that night.

Young Wild West excused himself and went to his room over an hour before they left.

It must have been considerably after midnight when Wild was awakened by hearing a noise in his room.

When he awoke he did not make a sound, but simply listened.

It was dark in the room, and he could see nothing.

But the next instant he heard a soft footfall.

His practised ear told him just where the person who had entered his room by some means was, and his hand reached for his belt that was on a chair beside the bed.

The next instant he had a revolver in his hand.

Just then a ray of light from a bull's-eye lantern flashed full upon him.

In the center of the apartment stood a masked man holding the lantern with one hand and gripping a long-bladed knife with the other.

"Well, my friend, what can I do for you?" asked Young Wild West, calmly.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD LEARNS CONSIDERABLE.

The masked man uttered an oath when he saw the revolver staring him in the face and heard the words of Young Wild West.

"Drop that knife!" commanded the young Pony Express rider, in a tone that was full of meaning.

Down went the weapon to the floor with a ring.

Then something happened that Wild was not expecting.

The door of the room was wide open, and as quick as a flash the masked villain turned and darted from the scene.

Wild did not fire.

He scrambled out of bed, hastily donned part of his clothing, and started in pursuit.

But when he got outside his masked visitor was nowhere to be seen.

By this time the landlord and some of the other inmates of the hotel were up.

They had been aroused by the noise the masked man made in leaving the house in such a hurry.

Thinking he might be mistaken for a burglar, Wild promptly called out to the landlord, saying:

"It is me—Young Wild West. I woke and found a masked man in my room. He got away before I could catch him."

"A masked man!" echoed the proprietor, as he came out, revolver in hand. "Well, by Jove! That beats me. What could he want in your room, I wonder?"

"He either wanted to kill or rob me, I suppose. I—hello! Here is the mask he wore, as sure as I live!"

The young prince of the saddle stooped and picked up the article in question, and held it up in his hands.

One of the hotel employees now came forward with a lighted lamp, and then all hands looked at the mask curiously.

It was made of the crown of a black felt hat, and had been tied with a string, which had broken in the flight of the man who had worn it, and thus it had dropped to the ground.

The eyeholes in the piece of felt were perfectly round, and as our hero looked at them carefully he came to the conclusion that they had been cut by a wad-cutter for a shotgun.

"The pieces cut out would just fit a ten-bore gun," he said to the landlord. "You haven't such a thing as a wad-cutter in the house, have you?"

"No," and the man shook his head. "We have two or three guns, but no wad-cutter."

"Well, the fellow must have been slightly familiar with the hotel, or he could not have got in and out so quickly and neatly. Have you any other guests besides these who are here?"

"No other one but ther surgeon from ther fort. He got so drunk that we had to put him to bed. He was in a regular stupor, an' ther chances are that he ain't heard a word of what's goin' on."

"I wish you would go up and see if he is in his room."

"Well, if you think it is necessary, I'll do that. I hope you don't think ther surgeon was ther one who wanted to rob you?"

"No. I don't think he would want to rob me. We had a quarrel, though, you know."

"Yes, but I thought that got all smoothed over?"

"It was, apparently."

"I'll take you to ther room of the surgeon, so you kin see for yourself if he is there."

"All right."

Axter led the way to the room the surgeon had been carried to after he became so drunk he could not help himself.

The door was ajar, and when Wild saw this he gave a satisfied nod.

He felt certain that it was Leon who had been in his room the moment he heard that he had roomed at the hotel that night.

The landlord pushed open the door and held the lantern inside.

One glance was sufficient to show that the room was empty, as far as a human being was concerned.

"That settles it!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "Surgeon Leon was the man. I am glad to know this, for I will now know how to treat him the next time I meet him."

"Well," observed Axter, scratching his head in a puzzled way, "I didn't think ther surgeon was that kind of a man; but it must have been him. Do you s'pose he wanted to kill you?"

"Yes. I have such an idea. Hereafter I will be on the lookout for him."

As Surgeon Leon spent considerable money with him, and had always shown himself a fine sort of a fellow, Axter had little to say about the occurrence.

But he had seen and heard enough of Young Wild West to make him have a great respect for him, and if it came to the test he was bound to stick to him.

"Well, I guess I will go back and finish my sleep," said Wild, in his usual cool way. "I feel pretty sure that my masked visitor won't show up again to-night. Good-night, all! I am sorry this thing happened to disturb you from your slumbers."

They all bade him good-night, and then the dashing young pony express rider went back to his room, closing and locking the door.

It had been locked before, but the villain must have thrust

a pair of pliers through the keyhole and turned the key in order to get in.

The incident was soon forgotten by Wild, and it was not long before he was sleeping as peacefully as though nothing had occurred to disturb him.

But when he got up the next morning and went to breakfast, what was his surprise to find Surgeon Leon seated at the table.

"Good-morning, Mr. West," he said affably. "I am all at sea this morning. I woke up about half an hour ago and found myself lying in the hallway at the other end of the house. The whisky I drank last night must have made me crawl around in my sleep."

"It must have had a wonderful effect on you, surgeon," replied Wild. "It even made you put on a mask and come into my room. What did you do with the knife you had, and how did you manage to turn the key in the lock, when it was on the inside?"

Leon looked at him in surprise.

But it was not genuine, though he was considerable of an actor.

"You surely don't mean what you say, Young Wild West?" he questioned.

"Let it drop, surgeon. If you are given to going about in your sleep and trying to stab people in bed, you are not responsible for it. Let it drop."

"I assure you that what you say is a mystery to me," and the man put on a look of anxious surprise that was nearly as good as the real thing.

"Let it drop, then," our hero answered, rather curtly.

Leon ate but very little, which showed that his debauch of the night before was telling heavily upon him.

He forced a cup of coffee down and then got up from the table.

A few minutes later his horse was brought to him and, mounting, he rode away in the direction of the fort.

A couple of minutes later Wild went out to the stable and, ordering his horse to be saddled, got ready to follow on the track of the man.

He was bent on having it out with the surgeon, if possible.

When he left the hotel he did not ride very fast, thinking that the fellow had proceeded leisurely.

But when he had covered ten miles and found that he was nowhere in sight yet, he struck out at a faster pace.

Five miles further on he suddenly came in sight of two horsemen.

He quickly reined in Spitfire, and rode beneath a tree at the side of the road.

He recognized the two horsemen at a glance.

One was Surgeon Leon, and the other was Gunnison, the hermit.

Wild watched them for a few minutes, and presently he saw the surgeon give the old man something and then ride on.

Waiting till he was out of sight, our hero rode out of the cover of the trees and rode out to meet Gunnison, who was now riding in that direction.

"Hello, Young Wild West!" the old fellow called out. "You are jest ther one I want to see."

"Good-morning, Mr. Gunnison. What do you want to see me about?"

"I jest met Surgeon Leon, an' had quite a talk with him. He told me not to say anything more about any one bein' in my cabin, an' he give me fifty dollars after I said I wouldn't."

"Ah!"

"I took ther money, 'cause when I told him I wouldn't say any more about it, I meant that I wouldn't say anything to him, you know."

"I see."

"Fifty dollars is a whole lot of money, you know."

"Yes," answered Wild, realizing how miserly the old man was.

"I found out what they was doin' in my cabin, I guess."

"Yes? Well, what were they doing there?"

"Well, ther first time they was there they had the surgeon's stepdarter there. She was caught in ther daytime by ther ones who took her away, you know, an' they kept her in my place till it was dark. I happened to be away at Yaller Dust, where I stay moren' half my time. You see, I'm gettin' a little tired of ther way I've been livin' so long, an' I feel sorter like mixin' up with people a little."

"Yes, I should think you would feel that way. How about the next time they were in there?"

"Well, ther surgeon says that him an' a friend was so drunk ther other night that they couldn't git back to ther fort, an' they thought they'd better put up at my cabin. They thought

it was robbers after 'em when you fellers come along, an' that is why they shot at you."

"Oh!"

"That is what they said they thought, you know."

"Yes, he would say that, naturally."

"But I think he means to kill you, if he kin. He didn't say so right out an' out, but he sorter talked that way."

"See here, Mr. Gunnison, have you told me all you know about this case?"

"Every word of what I know, Mr. West."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sir; I'm sartin of it. I wouldn't lie to you—not if I was paid for it."

"Well, if you are telling me all you know, so much the better for you. Some one is going to get into no end of trouble pretty soon, and I would not want to see it be you."

"Well, I've told you all I know about ther case; now you tell me what to do."

"Just go right on as you are, and try and find out where the surgeon's stepdaughter was taken to. Give him the privilege of using your cabin whenever he cares to, too."

"Yes, sir."

"And if you want to keep straight with the people at the fort, just tell me everything you find out."

"I'll do that, Young Wild West."

"Very well. Now, let us ride back to Yellow Dust. That is quite a horse you have there."

"Oh, he ain't much good. I bought him of Sol Sampson, in Yaller Dust. He kinder took pity on me an' sold him cheap."

Young Wild West talked with the man all the way back, but he could glean nothing further from him.

He concluded that he had been telling nothing but the truth, but he realized that his greed for gold might make him a different sort of a man in time.

Some men will do almost anything for money.

Wild thought he had better keep an eye on the hermit, for it was possible that he might take it in his head to go back on him.

When they reached the Axter House, in Yellow Dust, he treated the old fellow, and let the subject drop.

Our hero took things easy until it was time for Cheyenne Charlie to arrive at Yellow Dust with the mail.

Then he saddled Spitfire and got ready for the jaunt to Owl Flats.

He would make the run from the two places for that week, and the next they would change off.

Charlie came through right on the minute.

There had nothing occurred to interfere with him on the way.

"Any news?" asked our hero, as he took the bags and placed them on his horse.

"Nothin' much, only there is a reward offered for ther girl what's missin' from ther fort," was the reply.

"Well, I will hunt for her this trip. I have an idea that she might be somewhere around Owl Flats. Say!" and Wild lowered his voice to a whisper. "Jest keep an eye on Surgeon Leon. He tried to put a finish to me last night."

"Is that so?" asked the scout, in surprise. "Well, you kin jest bet I'll keep an eye on him!"

That was all they had a chance to say.

In order to make connections Wild must ride on.

He had changed the time of leaving so he would reach Owl Flats just about dusk.

Jim Dart would start out the first thing in the morning.

That would give Charlie a chance to take the mail and get it to the fort in the early part of the evening.

Wild rode along at a sharp pace, the miles rapidly rolling up.

He was keeping a sharp watch ahead of him, for he thought the Indians might be waiting for him again.

But he cared not so much for them as he did the whites he had met near the end of the route.

When about halfway to Owl Flats he met the patrol.

Lansing, the young fellow what was so much interested in the missing girl, was with them.

"I am going to ride into Owl Flats with you, Mr. West," he said. "That is why I rode out with the six men on duty."

"All right," was the reply. "Have you any suspicions of where the girl might be?"

"No, not exactly. But I think there is a gang of men who have a hiding-place somewhere pretty close to the town of Owl Flats."

"Yes?"

"Yes. And I have reason to believe that Percy Pearsall hangs out there about half the time. Last night Pearsall was

in town, drinking and gambling until quite late. When he left the saloon I followed him. He disappeared all of a sudden, about ten miles this side of the town. I hunted for over an hour, but could find no traces of him."

"By Jove!" said Wild. "I believe you are right when you say you think there is some sort of a hiding-place for a gang around there, then. I'll help you hunt for the place to-night!"

CHAPTER IX.

EMMA MICHELS ESCAPES.

Young Wild West and Lansing reached Owl Flats without mishap.

Our hero noticed that the bodies of the two men he had shot when he came over had been taken away.

From what Lansing had told him, he was now of the opinion that Percy Pearsall was in league with the mail robbers, and he resolved to pay a visit to the spot where he had disappeared that very night.

Jim Dart had picked up considerable during his short stay in the town, too.

By pumping the storekeeper and a bartender he had learned that there were two men, whose names were Burt and Dadson, that were supposed to be working a claim some eight or ten miles out of town, near the trail to Yellow Dust, but that no one had ever seen them doing much work.

When he once got this to work on, he began asking questions concerning the two men of the different miners he came across.

Invariably he got the same reply.

No one knew much about the men.

And Percy Pearsall was more of a mysterious character than either of them.

When he told Wild all he had learned, the two put their heads together and decided to hunt up these three men in particular.

Burt and Dadson had been to town that afternoon, and they had bought a supply of stores from the grocery.

It was a little before nine in the evening when Wild, Jim and Lansing rode out of the town.

They headed straight for the ridge at the right of the river, and did not halt until they were within a couple of hundred yards of the place where Lansing declared Percy Pearsall had disappeared when he had followed him.

They found a secluded spot and tied their horses. Then they began to hunt about the vicinity.

The robbers' retreat was a very snug one, and unless a person knew exactly how to reach it, nothing but an accident would lead them to it.

Accidents sometimes happen.

It chanced that Wild led his two companions into a ravine that ran almost parallel with the trail, after they had worked their way over the top of the ridge.

It was while they were stealthily making their way through the ravine that Wild suddenly heard a slight noise almost at his side.

Instantly he was all attention.

He placed his fingers to his lips to warn his companions to remain perfectly quiet.

It was a sort of peculiar scratching noise that he heard, and as he crouched there in a listening attitude, some loosened dirt came tumbling down upon his shoulders.

Some of it dropped on Jim and Lansing at the same time.

Then all three realized that they were on the eve of a discovery of some kind.

Young Wild West waited a couple of seconds, and then arose to a standing position.

Just then something happened that gave him a big surprise.

There was a muffled scream, followed by a crashing of loosened earth, and then a rather heavy body fell upon him, knocking him in a confused heap to the ground.

"My goodness!" cried the voice of a female. "Have I fallen in the hands of the very ones I was trying so hard to escape from, or is it friends I have found?"

"Friends!" replied Lansing, quickly. "Heavens! It is Miss Michels!"

At this Wild sprang to his feet.

He was just in time to see the young cavalryman catch the fainting form of a girl and keep her from falling.

"Mr. West," said Lansing, tremulously, "we have found the surgeon's stepdaughter!"

"What!" gasped Wild and Jim in unison.

"It is Emma Michels, just as sure as the stars are shining above our heads or that the moon is riding the sky yonder!"

There was just a tinge of the romantic in the words and

actions of the cavalryman, which the two boys did not fail to note, in spite of the remarkable occurrence.

But Young Wild West was not one to wonder very long.

"Jim," said he, in a whisper, "help Lansing to get the girl to the horses. Bring her to from her faint as soon as possible, and then start them off for the town."

"Yes," answered Dart. "And what then?"

"You come back here. We must find out what sort of a place it was she came from."

That was enough for Jim.

The next minute the pair of them were bearing the girl away from the spot with noiseless tread.

They carried her all the way to the spot where they had left the horses, and then, as she had not recovered from her swoon yet, they took her to the bank of the river.

By the aid of a water-soaked handkerchief they soon brought her to.

"Where am I?" cried the frightened girl, looking wildly around.

"With friends, Miss Michels," replied Lansing. "We were looking for you, and very strangely you fell right among us. Are you injured?"

"Oh, no," was the reply. "I am so glad you came, Mr. Lansing. Please take me away from here as soon as possible."

"I will do that soon enough. But, first, are you able to tell us where you came from when you dropped among us so suddenly?"

"Yes," she answered. "I am all right now. Percy Pearsall has had me confined in a cave for several days, and to-night I managed to finish digging a hole through the end of the place I was kept in, and when I pushed my head and shoulders through to find where I was coming out, the ground gave way and I fell down. I remember seeing your face, Mr. Lansing, and hearing your voice; then I fainted, from joy, I guess. I will tell you all I know about the place."

She did so in a very few words, winding up by saying:

"There were six men under the command of Percy Pearsall when I was brought here, but learned from the squaw who attended to my wants that there are only four now. Two of them were shot by a pony express rider, whom they call Young Wild West."

"Exactly," said Jim Dart. "It was Young Wild West who broke your fall when you fell from the hole in the cave, miss. He is there waiting for me now, so you had better go on with Mr. Lansing. He will take you to the headquarters of the troopers, where you will be perfectly safe."

"My—my father is not there, is he?" she asked hesitatingly.

"No," spoke up Lansing. "Your stepfather is not there. He is supposed to be at Fort Unity."

"I am glad of that. It was he who bargained with Percy Pearsall to take me away and put me to death."

"Ah! I thought so."

"The fiend!" added Jim.

"Pearsall changed his mind about killing me after he got me to his hiding-place," went on the girl. "He decided to betray the surgeon and force me to marry him."

"He did, eh?" cried the cavalryman fiercely. "Well, I guess he will never live to do that, Miss Michels."

"I would die before I would become his wife!"

Emma Michels shuddered as she said this, and involuntarily drew closer to Lansing.

The feelings the young couple had held toward each other had ripened into love.

Jim noticed that they appeared as though they had been lovers, but he said nothing.

"Lansing," he remarked, a few moments later, "you can carry Miss Michels over to Owl Flats on your horse, can't you?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply.

"Well, start at once, then. I want to go back to Wild. He has some idea in his head, I guess, and I want to help him carry it out."

"All right. We will be off at once."

Dart assisted to get the girl in position on the horse's back, and then the young couple rode off.

Jim then cautiously retraced his steps to the ravine where he had left Wild.

He had no difficulty in finding the entrance to the ravine, since he had marked the spot well in his mind.

He did not neglect the woodcraft he always employed, though, and approached the place where he had left the young prince of the saddle as carefully as though he knew there were men watching to get a shot at him. But when he reached the identical place where the girl had tumbled from the opening in the cave, Wild was not there!

CHAPTER X.

WILD AND JIM DO SOME GREAT WORK.

Dart and Lansing had scarcely disappeared from view with the unconscious girl, when Young Wild West suddenly heard a crackling sound right near him.

Revolver in hand, he turned in the direction the sound came from, and then a big, burly form pounced upon him from behind.

The weapon was wrenched from his grasp and a hand was placed over his mouth before he knew what had happened.

He made a struggle to free himself, but it was in vain, for another man came to the assistance of the first one almost immediately, and then Wild was forced to the ground.

In a very short space of time he was bound and gagged, and then, without so much as a word, his captors picked him up bodily and bore him away.

But, though he was bound and gagged, the boy could see, by the aid of the bright moonlight, that he was being carried out of the ravine to the trail.

"I am in for it once more," he thought, as all his coolness returned to him. "But if they don't kill me right off, I will fool them yet. I have been in such a fix before."

That was a peculiar way to look at it, one might think, but Young Wild West was one of the sort who always look on the bright side of things, no matter how dark and gloomy they appear.

The men who had so neatly captured him were no others than Dadson and Burt, the two who had arrived at the headquarters in time to prevent the escape of Emma Michels when she made the first attempt.

They had just left the retreat to ride over to Owl Flats, when they heard voices in the ravine, which was right close to the entrance of the secret cave.

They quickly dismounted and tied their horses, and then they sneaked toward the ravine from the side of the hill in the direction they had heard the sounds.

It so happened that they did not get to the spot until after Jim and the cavalryman had left with the girl.

But they could see the figure of Young Wild West standing there in the moonlight, and they resolved to capture him and take him before the captain.

It is just possible that if they had known he was Young Wild West they would have shot him down. But they did not, nor did they when they had succeeded in making a prisoner of him.

The two outlaws did not look for the others they had heard talking; they hurried to get their prisoner into the cave.

And they did this in short order, the man on guard being very much astonished when our hero was lugged inside in a helpless condition.

"A spy, I reckon," observed Burt. "We caught him in the ravine out there."

"Take him in an' let the captain see him," was the reply.

The captive was then quickly carried through the passage into the cave, and when the light from the hanging oil lamp struck Wild's eyes he blinked like an owl.

"Aha!" exclaimed a voice that our hero knew only too well. "What have we here?"

"A feller we caught sneakin' around close by, cap," was the retort from Dadson.

"A spy, eh? Well, I guess we will take care of him, then. We will show him that he— What! By the living jingo! it is Young Wild West!"

At this the other men in the cave and the squaws came hurriedly forward.

"It is Young Wild West, sure enough," resumed Percy Pearsall, for it was he who had spoken. "Well, I consider this is great luck!"

"Well, we didn't know it was him when we pounced on him," said Burt. "Now I guess we kin git square on him for layin' two of us low."

"Yes, I rather think we will square accounts with him," remarked Pearsall. "Young Wild West's pony express will surely come to an abrupt ending, and the ending will take place this very night. It is too bad for one to die so young, but he is altogether too soon for his time. The good die young, so they say, and that is the way it will be in this case."

As Wild heard this remark he realized that the villains surely meant to kill him.

But he did not show a sign of being frightened.

"Shall we take the gag out of his mouth, cap?" asked Burt.

"Yes: if he goes to yelling for help I'll shoot him right now. Was he alone out there?"

"Well, we heard some one talkin', but when we got to the spot he was the only one there."

"What! And you didn't look for any one else? You are fools, the pair of you! Heard some one talking, did you? You don't suppose Young Wild West is one of the sort who goes around talking to himself, do you? Go out and look to see if there is any one else about. If you see any one shoot them dead the instant you can cover them. Why, it might be that he had a dozen men with him, and that we will be raided at any minute."

Burt and Dadson slunk off immediately.

"Take the gag from his mouth," continued the villain, addressing the other outlaw.

He leveled his revolver at the captive as he spoke.

"How are you, Mr. Pearsall?" observed Young Wild West, coolly, the moment he had the use of his tongue. "This is quite a joke you are playing on me. It reminds me of the stories I have read of how they haze the students at different colleges."

"It does, eh? Well, I am glad you take it as a joke. But let me tell you, Young Wild West, you have just fifteen minutes to live, so make your peace with your Maker, and be quick about it!"

"That's all right, Pearsall. You can't fool me. Some people might be frightened by this, but I am not one of that kind. I have seen too many practical jokes played."

The outlaw captain looked at the boy quizzically.

"Do you really think I am fooling?" he asked.

"Certainly I do. I know you would not kill me."

"Well, just stop thinking that way, then, for as soon as the two who brought you here come back you are going to die."

"You are not getting crazy, are you?" asked our hero, affecting surprise.

"Oh, no!"

"Just untie me, then."

"You will never be untied alive."

"Pshaw! Untie me, Pearsall. You are carrying the joke a little too far now."

The robber captain looked at the boy keenly.

There was nothing about the face of Wild to indicate anything else than that he was fearless and just the least bit angry.

But he knew well enough that he was in a tight place.

He had not the least idea but that Pearsall would kill him.

But Young Wild West meant to save himself, if there was any way possible to do it.

If acting coolly would delay things any, he was the one to do it.

"Mr. Pearsall," said the boy, a moment later, "I feel that you are playing a joke on me, but if it should be that you are not, and that you really mean to do what you say, you will not live two hours. I am something of a seer, and I make that prediction with great sincerity."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the villain, though Wild noticed that the laugh was forced.

"You had better untie me at once," resumed Wild. "I came around this part of the country to-night in search of the step-daughter of Surgeon Leon. I promised that I would do all I could to find her, and I did the first thing after I got here."

"You mean you think you have found her," spoke up Pearsall sneeringly.

"No thinking about it. I have found her, and she is now well on her way to Owl Flats. I have a way of doing things, you know, that never fails."

The outlaw captain looked at him aghast.

"Do you mean to say that you found Emma Michels, and that she is now on her way to Owl Flats?" he asked.

"That is just what I do mean. I wonder how it was that you did not find her. She was so close to you, too."

Young Wild West had been working his wrists for the past minute, and he found that he could slip his bonds.

He was preparing for a desperate move.

There were but three men in the place, including the guard, and six squaws.

If he could get his hands free and grab a revolver from the belt of Percy Pearsall, he would willingly take his chances with the whole lot of them.

Pearsall appeared to be puzzled and worried at the same time.

"Stand here by him," he said to one of the men. "There is no danger of his running away. I guess, but you had better keep a sharp eye on him, for all that. I am going to see if what he said about the girl is true."

As Pearsall moved toward a corner of the cave our hero shifted his feet so he could brace himself.

Though his captors had wound a rope about the upper part of his body, pinioning his arms, they had not done anything to his lower extremities.

Wild had now worked the rope loose so he could free his hands the moment he desired to do it.

The man who stepped up to him for the purpose of keeping an eye on him was a half-breed.

The belt he wore fairly bristled with weapons, giving him a formidable appearance.

He was enough to frighten a timid person, but Young Wild West merely smiled at him when he came up close to him.

As the robber captain unfastened the door to go to the apartment where he had left the girl captive, Wild suddenly lowered his head and butted the half-breed full in the stomach.

Then he jerked his hands free and grabbed a pair of revolvers from the belt of the man as he was in the act of settling to the ground with the wind completely knocked out of him from the force of the blow.

The guard could not see what had been done, so the only ones who did see it were the squaws.

They at once set up a howl of alarm, and turning as quick as a wink, Pearsall saw what had happened.

He drew his revolver and began firing at our hero, who had now stepped behind a jutting point of rock at the side of the cave.

The captain had fired just three shots when the door he had unfastened flew open and the active figure of a boy sprang out, a revolver in either hand.

It was Jim Dart.

"Hands up!" he cried. "Hands up, Pearsall, or down you go!"

"That's it, Jim!" called out Young Wild West, who was now right in his element. "If he makes another move to show fight, drop him!"

Jim had come back to the spot where he had left Wild and, finding him gone, he had acted on the first thought that came to him.

This happened to be for him to climb up the side of the ravine and enter the hole the girl had emerged from.

It struck him that Wild had gone in the place that way, and that being the case, he would follow.

And Jim had got there just in time to hear some one fooling with the door.

He held his revolver ready for instant use and waited.

The next instant two reports rang out in quick succession from the other side of the door.

Then Dart acted, and very quickly at that.

He flung open the door and came upon Percy Pearsall in the act of shooting his chum.

Jim's first impression was to shoot the scoundrel in the back, but he did not.

He simply called out to him to hold his hands up, for his quick eye told him that Wild was really the master of the situation.

But just then something happened that Jim had not figured on.

Swiftly approaching footsteps were heard, and then the guard and the two men who had been sent out by the captain came rushing in.

They comprehended the situation at a glance, it seemed, for they promptly began firing.

And when they began to fire Young Wild West and Jim Dart set in to return the compliment.

Wild dropped the guard as he was in the act of discharging his revolver for the third time, and Jim put a bullet in the left shoulder of the fellow called Dadson.

The shooting made considerable smoke in the low-ceilinged cave, and before he could be stopped Percy Pearsall darted into the cave Jim had emerged from so suddenly.

Jim quickly worked his way over to Wild.

The squaws were uttering frightful howls and imprecations in their own tongue, and all was confusion.

Burt immediately ran out of the cave when he saw the guard and Dadson fall.

He did not like to be around when such shooting was going on.

The only man left in the place now was the half-breed, and he sat upon the floor, too frightened to get up and run.

"See here," said Wild, addressing him; "just you tell the squaws to shut up and drop their weapons, and get in a bunch in that corner over there. If they don't, and persist in shooting at us, we will surely treat them the same as if they were men."

The man promptly called out in the Indian tongue to the squaws, and the moment they understood him they obeyed

"Now, then, you stand right where you are, and don't you dare to move for the next five minutes. If you do you will be apt to go under the same as the other two fellows did just now!"

As our hero said this he started for the door the captain had gone through.

Jim followed him.

The half-breed, being without a shooter, since Wild had taken them from him, remained standing with his hands above his head; the squaws huddled together in a corner as though they expected every minute to be their last on earth.

Our two darling friends quickly went into the apartment the girl captive had been confined in.

The light that had been allowed the girl was still there, which showed that Pearsall had not taken the time to extinguish it in his hasty flight.

The villain must have discovered the way to get out at the start, for the draperies were torn aside and the opening made by the girl was plainly visible.

Wild unhesitatingly pushed his head through and looked out.

In the moonlight he could see the bottom of the ravine about ten feet below very plainly.

There was nothing living there.

Drawing in his head, he thrust his feet through, and then allowed himself to slide down.

"All right!" he called out to Jim, as he struck the ground and recovered his balance.

Then Jim quickly followed.

Once in the ravine, they hurriedly made their way to the trail.

They had just reached the mouth of the ravine when the sounds of receding hoofs came to their ears.

That there was more than one man riding away was plainly evident by the sounds.

"The scoundrels have got their horses somehow, and they are now making their escape. Let us get our horses and pursue them!" cried Wild.

"Hurry, then!" answered Jim.

They hastily made their way to the spot where their horses were hidden.

They had not been disturbed, and quickly untying them, they mounted.

Out upon the trail they dashed, and turning, followed the escaping villains, who had chosen to go in the direction of Owl Flats.

But though they rode at a fast gait it was a hopeless race. The outlaws had got too good a start.

"How many were there of them, do you think?" Jim asked, as they came to a brief halt and listened.

"I should say that there were not more than two or three," Wild replied.

"Well, they have got the best of us, for I can no longer hear them."

"Well, let them go for to-night, then. We will surely meet them again. Percy Pearsall is the sort of a man who does not give up very easily, if I am any judge of him. He will be looking for a chance to be revenged upon me."

"And you will be waiting for him to show himself."

"That's right. I want to take him alive if I can, for I have an idea that he and the surgeon at the Fort are responsible for all the robberies of the mail in this section. I have an idea that this Pony Express of ours is going to break up the business around here for a while. We must land Pearsall and Surgeon Leon where they belong, and after that it will be very easy to dispose of the rest."

"That's so," nodded Dart.

They rode on into Owl Flats without meeting any one.

As soon as they found that Emma Michels was safely under the protection of the troopers they went to their hotel and turned in.

CHAPTER XI.

WILD IN ANOTHER TIGHT PLACE.

The morning following Jim Dart started out with the mail, as usual, leaving Wild to take a rest at Owl Flats.

It had been left to Wild to arrange the hour of leaving with the mails to suit himself; all the contract called for was that they should be delivered on time.

Our hero resolved to spend a good portion of his resting spell in searching for Percy Pearsall.

He had written a letter to Surgeon Leon that morning in which he informed the villain that his step-daughter had been found, and invited him to get leave and come over to Owl

Flats and see her, as she had decided not to return to her former home just then.

This was sent with the regular mail, and Young Wild West smiled softly as he thought of how astonished the surgeon would be to read the communication.

He knew the man would do anything but come over to Owl Flats, for Emma had told him everything she knew about the kidnaping scheme.

But Wild did think that the surgeon would surely seek the villain he had bargained with, and he meant to be on the lookout for the pair of them.

Shortly after Jim had gone he went over to the barracks and had a talk with David Lansing, the private, who had shown so much interest in the search for the missing girl.

He had insisted the night before that this man should have all the honors in the rescue of the maiden, and he told him he desired him to demand the reward that had been offered by the surgeon.

He brought up the subject again this morning by saying:

"Lansing, you must not forget to put in your claim for the reward. You were really the one who brought the girl away from the retreat of the outlaws. She got out herself, but you were the one who conveyed her to a place of safety. You claim this reward, and I will see that the scoundrel is forced to either pay it, or else leave the army in disgrace. I have a little influence with some of your superiors, and when I go over to the fort, which I will do on my next trip with the mail, I am going to ask for a promotion for you."

"Thank you!" exclaimed Lansing, earnestly. "I shall never forget you, Young Wild West."

"I think you are deserving of promotion, or I should not recommend it. You would make a good second lieutenant, I have an idea."

"Oh! it will be a long while before I get as high as that."

"Perhaps not such a long while; a month, say."

"Do you think you can bring that about, Mr. West?"

"I have an idea that I can. I am going to do my best at it. I have noticed that you and the young lady are very much interested in each other, and I know enough of the ways of the world to realize that it would not be good policy for you to marry on the salary of a private."

"I should say not," and Lansing blushed like a schoolgirl.

"I suppose you have been aspiring to be something above a common private in the ranks some day?"

"Yes; I hope soon to be a corporal, anyway."

"Well, how is your record as a private?"

"Very clean, I am proud to say."

"Good! Just leave the rest to me."

It was about noon on that same day when Wild was riding back to town after an unsuccessful search for Percy Pearsall that he met the party of Indians who had held him up on his first trip with the mail.

One of them was a chief of the lower order, and when he saw who it was that halted among them he became very uneasy.

"Paleface have soldiers arrest Indians?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

"No," answered Wild, "I did not bother about having you arrested. I thought I had punished you myself for the way you acted the other day."

"Paleface boy heap much brave. He carry the mails straight for the Great Father at Washington," said the chief, beginning to flatter the young prince of the saddle as only a red man can when he takes the notion.

"That is right, chief. You are a good Indian when you are asleep. I will give you the credit for that. Now, I want you to answer me a question or two."

"What paleface brave want to know?"

"Where is the man who has been robbing the stage-coaches the past few months and taking the mail bags?"

"Me no know."

"Yes, you do know. He lived in a cave with six men who had squaws for their wives."

"Me know."

"I thought you did. It will be all the better for you if you tell me all you know about Captain Percy Pearsall."

"Me meet him this morning," said the Indian, after he had thought a moment.

"Yes, I supposed you did."

Wild said this, though he had not really thought so.

"He and another paleface go that way," and he pointed in the direction of Yellow Dust.

"How long ago, chief?"

"Two, three hours."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes. He take blanket from red men; paint his face and make look like red man."

"Ah! he has disguised himself, has he? Good!"

"He cut off squaw's hair and put on his head; stick feathers in like chief."

"I am glad to hear that."

"Then he ride off with other paleface, who fix himself like red man, too."

"Very good, chief. You can go on to Owl Flats, and if you behave yourselves, all of you, I won't say anything about what you did the other day."

The Indians seemed to be glad when they heard this, and they promptly made off.

"Well," mused Young Wild West, as he rode into town, "I have learned something this morning, anyway, for I feel that the redskin told me the truth. I wonder what he can be heading for Owl Flats for, unless it is to meet the surgeon? I must ride over there this afternoon and let Jim bring the mail back on the next trip. He will have enough rest, anyway, and can do it for this once. I want to be the one to bring the mail from Fort Unity to Yellow Dust on Monday, anyway, so the order of things can be changed a little."

As soon as the boy had eaten his dinner he set out on his long ride along the trail to Yellow Dust.

Spitfire was in perfect condition, and the noble animal wanted to go faster than his young master cared to let him just then.

Wild meant to take it rather easy and reach the town about eight in the evening.

It would be rather nery for Pearsall to go to Yellow Dust in disguise, unless it was a perfect one, and the boy could not bring himself to think it was a perfect one.

Wild rode on, and, without meeting any one on the road, reached Yellow Dust a little after eight in the evening.

Axter was surprised to see him when he came in the hotel, and he went and called Jim Dart, who was in the back room reading.

Jim was surprised to see him, too. He knew something must be in the wind.

But he did not say anything, leaving it to his chum to speak first.

"Well, what is new, Jim?" Wild asked when they were alone.

"Surgeon Leon has left the Fort, so we heard this afternoon," was the reply.

"Left, eh? How did it become known that he had left?"

"That I don't know exactly. It is a rumor, but I guess there is lots of truth in it. The four men who were here the night you had the muss have deserted, also."

"Ah! that looks suspicious. Now, I want to ask you a question. Have you seen anything of two fellows disguised as Indians any time to-day?"

"No. Why?"

Then Wild told him what he had learned.

Jim was very much surprised.

The two had a long talk, and finally they came to the conclusion that the villains were lurking around somewhere.

"They won't be apt to leave the vicinity of the trail," said Wild. "They will want to be revenged upon me before they do that. We must be mighty careful, Jim."

"You bet!"

"I guess I will borrow a fresh horse and ride over to the fort. You will have to take the mail over to Owl Flats in the morning and bring it back. You can get a fresh horse over there."

"Yes, I can do it easily enough. It does not tire me to ride. I could keep it up for a whole week, if necessary."

"Well, as soon as I get something to eat I am going to ride over to the fort."

He soon got what he wanted in the line of eating and drinking, and then he took the horse the landlord provided him with, and after leaving instructions that his horse should be ready for him when he came back, he sallied forth.

Somehow it occurred to the boy that he was going to have a lively time of it before he got back.

This got into his head so strongly that he could not shake off the feeling.

But never once did he change his mind about going.

He was always ready for a lively time, and as he had seen many of them, they were nothing new to him.

It was a moonlight night, and the horse he rode being a pretty good one, he rode fast.

Forty miles is not so much of a journey to one who was used to roughing it in the mountains and on the plains.

The nearer he got to the cabin of the hermit, the more determined our hero became to stop at it.

He had made sure that Gunnison was not in Yellow Dust before he set out, and that made him think that he might know something about the surgeon and the rest of the deserters.

The cabin might be a sort of headquarters for them.

Wild rode on through the moonlight, halting occasionally to listen, for he thought it might be possible that some one was following him.

But no such thing came to pass, and at length he came in sight of the lone cabin.

Halting a few yards from it, he tied his horse in a clump of trees and proceeded on foot to the little building.

There was no light coming from the windows, but that did not prevent him from going to the door.

After listening for a minute and not hearing anything to indicate that there was anybody inside, he gave a knock.

Almost instantly he heard some one stirring.

But whoever it might be, the door was not opened.

Wild gave another knock.

Then came the shuffling of hurried footsteps, and the next moment the door was unlocked and thrown open.

In the moonlight Wild saw the figure of Gunnison standing before him.

The old man's face was deathly pale and he was trembling violently.

Our hero pushed him gently aside and stepped into the cabin.

"I am so glad you are here to save me, Young Wild West!" cried Gunnison, bursting out excitedly. "They seen you coming, an' they made me——"

A pistol shot rang out, cutting the words short.

The hermit dropped to the floor with a bullet in his heart just as the light from a bull's-eye lantern was flashed in Wild's face.

Our hero caught a glimpse of five revolvers which were leveled at him, but nothing daunted, he opened fire, knowing full well that he had walked into a trap.

He shot a man dead in his tracks, but before he could again press the trigger of his six-shooter the weapon was knocked from his grasp and he was upset.

With a crash he landed upon the floor, and then half a dozen eager hands seized him.

"I guess we have got you now, my young Pony Express rider!" hissed the voice of Surgeon Leon. "You have come to your doom, Young Wild West!"

Wild made a violent struggle to free himself from them, but it was useless.

They held him down and quickly disarmed him.

"Tie him up and gag him," said the surgeon; and the four men with him were those who had deserted to link their fortunes with him in a career of crime.

There was plenty of rope handy, and they soon had our hero lying helpless on the floor.

"Now, then, Young Wild West," remarked the scoundrel, as he proceeded to make an improvised gag from a piece of the bed clothing he found in the room, "have you anything to say before you roast alive?"

"Do your worst!" exclaimed Wild. "You will find that I will never beg for mercy from such as you. I might inform you, though, before you gag me, that your step-daughter has been found and that she is in safe hands."

"You need not tell me that; I imagined that such was the case. I also imagined that you were going to break up my little business enterprise, and I have been waiting here for you to come along, for something seemed to tell me that you would come."

As the villain said this he glared at the helpless boy with fury in his eyes.

"Young Wild West, your doom is sealed," he went on. "You have meddled with business that did not concern you, and you are going to roast alive for doing so. It was a sorry day for you when you agreed to carry the mails from Fort Unity to Owl Flats. When you took that step you entered into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. I would like to be able to hear your cries as you take your departure from the green earth, but there are others who might hear and come to your help; so I will gag you."

Without anything further the gag was placed in the helpless boy's mouth, and then, rising to his feet, the scoundrel turned to his companions and said:

"Set the cabin on fire, men! He has shot one of us, and we will let the body be cremated along with that of the old man whose greed for money brought on his death. Have you got the hermit's treasure?"

"Yes," came the reply from one of the deserters.

"Then light the bunch of rags and paper, and we will away to meet Percy Pearsall and his men!"

The next minute the entire interior of the cabin was in a blaze, and Young Wild West was left to a horrible fate!

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

When Young Wild West saw the blaze all around him he was on the verge of giving himself up for lost.

As hopeful and courageous as he was, it seemed that death certainly was at hand now.

He struggled as he never had before to break the bonds, and the efforts he made to cry for help were something fierce.

Surgeon Leon was last to leave the burning cabin, and as he went he cast one look of diabolical satisfaction at the struggling boy on the floor.

"Good-by, Young Wild West!" he called out. "In a few minutes you will begin to roast! I wish you a pleasant journey to the bourne from which no traveler returns!"

The rags and papers that had been piled up burned rapidly, and as Leon disappeared from the view of the agonized prince of the saddle the bed clothing became ignited.

As the bed that had been used by the hermit was but three feet from Wild, it seemed that it would soon be all over with him.

But man proposes, Heaven disposes!

That is an old saying that is as true as it is old.

Above the crackling of the flames Young Wild West suddenly heard the sounds of firing.

There was magic in the sound, it seemed, for the brave boy did something he had not thought of before.

He began rolling his body toward the door.

Right through a blazing mass of paper he went, regardless of setting his clothes on fire.

He reached the door in an exhausted condition, only to find that it had been closed.

"Heaven help me!" thought Young Wild West. "Unless help comes quickly I am surely doomed!"

But Young Wild West was not destined to die in such a cruel and heartless manner.

Though the fringe on his buckskin trousers had become ignited, and the flames were all around him, there was help at hand.

Suddenly the door opened against him with such force as to send him rolling over into the blaze, and then——

A pair of hands seized him and dragged him out into the open air.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the voice of Jim Dart. "Wild, old fellow, I am on time!"

Then Jim, for it was surely he, began beating out the fire that had taken possession of the boy's clothing.

And he succeeded before even a small blister had been burned.

Wild, perfectly conscious of what was taking place, felt himself dragged away from the scorching flames; then the gag was torn from his mouth and a keen knife severed the bonds that held him powerless.

The blaze from the burning cabin lit up the scene as with the glare of the noonday sun, and as Wild got upon his feet he gave a quick glance around for a sight of his enemies.

But they were gone!

"Thank you, Jim!" he said, seizing his chum by the hand. "You were just in time."

"And I am just as glad as you are that I was," was the fervent reply. "Something told me to follow you to-night, and I did so. I am sorry the scoundrels got away, but I had to get you out of that blaze. I wounded one of them, though, I am quite certain."

"How did you know I was in the cabin?"

"I didn't know it, but I thought you must be when I saw the glare of the fire and caught a glimpse of four men mounting their horses to ride away."

"And then you opened fire on them?"

"Yes. I knew they must have set the place on fire, or they would not be leaving the scene so quickly; and I also came to the conclusion that you were inside the cabin, so I just let them have it. They never answered my shots, but rode on in the direction of Yellow Dust as fast as they could get their horses to go."

"Well, nothing can save the cabin now. There are two bodies inside it, too. One is that of Gunnison and the other is that of one of the deserters from the Fort. The surgeon shot the hermit, and I dropped the other fellow before they downed me. I was taken completely by surprise, and it was no use. If I had known those fellows were in there when I knocked at the door I would surely have dropped or captured the whole five of them."

"Well, I suppose we had better try and catch them, hadn't we?"

"Yes."

"Where is your horse?"

"Right over behind those trees over there."

Jim Dart shook his head at this.

"That is where the villains started from," said he.

Jim caught his horse by the bridle, and then Wild led the way to the clump of trees.

His horse was not there!

"They have taken the horse with them!" he cried. "Well, they have just the least bit the best of it yet, but I will win out in spite of them—see if I don't! I am alive yet; and that is more than they expect, no doubt."

"What will we do now?" queried Dart, who was at a loss which way to proceed.

"The best thing we can do is to ride over to the Fort. Then all three of us will start out with the mail. We will change horses at Yellow Dust as we go, and do the same coming back, if it is necessary for us all to come back. I am going to wind up the career of the mail robbers before I am twenty-four hours older. Surgeon Leon and his men will meet Percy Pearsall, just as sure as two and two are four. We must hunt them now to the finish."

When they had made sure that Wild's horse was nowhere to be found, the pair of them got upon Jim's steed and set out for Fort Unity.

The fort was reached in due time, and the officer in charge was much surprised to see them.

But when he heard all that had happened to them he was astonished.

"So it has sifted down to this state, has it?" he observed. "Well, I guess Surgeon Leon will not get very far. I will send out a detachment at once to scour the country for him."

The next morning at daybreak Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart stood waiting for the mail bags.

The mail from the East had come in late the night before, and it had taken some little time to sort and get ready what was to go on the route.

Wild had been furnished with a good horse, but he was waiting till he got upon the back of his own Spitfire once more.

Wild had the mail bags swung over the borrowed horse, and he led the way, while the soldiers at the fort uttered a cheer.

There was something very dashing about the handsome young prince of the saddle, and no wonder he excited the admiration of the crowd!

When our three friends reached the scene of the fire they found a detachment that had been sent out half an hour before tearing away the ashes and debris, so they could recover the charred bodies.

Young Wild West did not stop there.

On thundered the three riders, and Yellow Dust grew gradually nearer.

And all the while they were on the alert for danger.

They did not know at what minute a bullet would come whistling past their ears from some hidden quarter.

Their horses were steaming and flecked with foam when they drew up in front of the Axter House, at Yellow Dust.

In less than five minutes they changed horses, and then proceeded on their way.

The young deadshot was now mounted on his swift steed Spitfire.

He felt more at home when the sorrel was under him.

When they had ridden about fifteen miles, a puff of smoke suddenly came from a little grove on their left, and a report followed.

Neither of the three heard the whiz of a bullet, so they concluded that it had been badly aimed, if they were the target.

Another shot followed a few seconds later, and this time a bullet hit Cheyenne Charlie's horse in the shoulder and dropped the animal, the rider being thrown over its head.

"Ah!" exclaimed Young Wild West: "now the fun begins. Just drop a couple of shots there, boys!"

Jim obeyed instantly, and as soon as Charlie got up he followed suit.

A wild yell rang out at this, and the next instant a mixed crowd of a dozen men came dashing toward them from the cover of the trees.

Some of them were Indians and some whites, the latter in the majority, Wild's practised eye told him.

It was in a little hollow where they had halted, and with the utmost coolness Young Wild West ordered his horse to lie down.

Spitfire obeyed just as if he had been a dog.

Jim had a little more difficulty in getting his steed down. It was not his own, and that made it harder for him.

But the horse got down after a few seconds, with the bullets from the advancing foe whistling all around him.

"Boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West, "when I give the word I want you to begin on that gang. Charlie, you take the man on the left and shoot toward the right; Jim, you begin in the center and shoot on both sides. I will take care of the other end."

The bullets were flying around them like hail now, but they were not the least disconcerted.

They knew it was hard for the villains to hit them from their horses while they crouched in the hollow.

"Now give it to them!"

As our hero gave the word three rifles began cracking.

The villains must have been desperate—so desperate, in fact, that they lost all caution, for they were riding in a semi-circle to certain destruction.

At the first three shots as many of them tumbled from the saddle.

Crack! crack! crack!

Three more went down before they could turn from their onward rush.

"Steady now!" said Wild; "they have all got to go under or be captured. I see the surgeon and Percy Pearsall among them. Pearsall is disguised as an Indian, but he can't fool me."

"Me, either," answered Charlie.

"I can tell him, too," Jim observed.

"Drop them all but the two, then, if they keep on coming!"

They did keep on coming, and in less than ten seconds all the saddles but two were emptied.

The two, who had at last concluded that it was life or death with them now, were Pearsall and Leon.

Wild was on his horse's back in a twinkling.

He was going to run them down.

The desperate villains, having emptied their rifles, now began firing their revolvers at the pursuing boy.

But they were simply wasting their shots.

Wild was waiting for them to do this.

One minute later, and he saw them in the act of reloading their weapons.

"Stop that!" he called out, leveling his rifle at them. "Surrender now, or you will both be dead men!"

The villains thought he surely meant to shoot, so they gave up.

Fifteen minutes later they were bound to the backs of their horses and on their way to Fort Unity, under the charge of Jim Dart and Cheyenne Charlie, who had easily found a horse to suit him from those that were galloping around riderless.

Young Wild West went on through with the mail to Owl Flats.

Young Wild West's Pony Express had been a success, and it had also been the means of breaking up a dangerous gang and bringing a traitor to the Government to his just deserts.

Emma Michels had no recourse to go to law with her stepfather, for he was found guilty at a court-martial and shot, as was Percy Pearsall.

The latter made a clean breast of everything before he died, showing what a perfidious villain the surgeon had been.

There is nothing more to add to this story, except that Young Wild West and his two partners ran the Pony Express to the end of the month, and received the money Wild's contract called for.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST ON THE BIG DIVIDE; OR, THE RAID OF THE RENEGADES."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

The Gaekwar of Baroda has contributed \$160,000 to provide aeroplanes for use on the British front. Last December he purchased the steamship Empress of India as a hospital ship for Indian troops. Soon after the war began he offered all his troops and resources to aid the British.

According to the London Times, the German authorities at Brussels have offered a reward of \$2,500 for information as to the location of a wireless telegraph station supposed to be working in some private house in that city. For nine months it has furnished the people of Brussels with war news which the Germans desired to keep from them, and the search for it has hitherto been unsuccessful.

Gold has been discovered in the town of Diana, Lewis County, N. Y., according to a claim filed the other day with Secretary of State Francis M. Hugo by Nathan L. Dike, a resident of that section. "Take notice," the claim reads, "that this day Nathan Dike has found gold in the rocks on or near the south line of the old Barber farm in the town of Diana." The dimensions of the claim are set forth. A dollar bill accompanied the communication.

The disabled Japanese cruiser Asama, which went ashore near Turtle Bay, Lower California, early in February, is expected to arrive in a day or two. She is being convoyed by the Japanese naval repair ship Kwanto Maru, which will be permitted to take on coal enough to carry her to the nearest home port. The cause of the Asama's grounding has not been made known. Her hull was damaged and months were required to raise the vessel and repair the damage.

In one of a series of articles in the New York Sun on the Mexican situation, Ray G. Carroll says: "Many an American army officer has told me of his heartsick feelings on seeing boxes of cartridges, rifles and machine guns cross the Rio Grande. Army officers know that at a time not far distant they may be called upon to lead their men against these same munitions of war. They point to the comparatively recent situation at Vera Cruz, where Mexican sentries faced our men with military rifles and cartridges of the latest American make."

The age of the "horseless farm" has arrived. G. T. Wycoff, of Crivitz, Wis., who moved to Marinette County from Bloomington, Ill., two years ago, works an improved farm exclusively with a tractor. He also cleared the farm and made it ready for cultivation without the use of horses. His "horseless farm" consists of eighty acres. He owns an eleven-ton tractor, which takes the place of horses in all farmwork. He drives an automobile and generally uses it for trips to markets, but when heavy loads are taken to town the tractor is used to pull trains of two or three wagons.

The Pennsylvania railroad will offer the United States Government an army of 100,000 men. It is the biggest move ever made by any company in the world for national preparedness. It comes from the highest Pennsylvania railroad authorities, who are maturing a plan to let every employee take a month's vacation and go to a training camp for military instruction. The size of the army depends upon how many employees will accept this offer. If everybody went the Pennsylvania's legion would greatly outnumber the army which Meade commanded at Gettysburg.

The Alexander Smith & Sons Carpet Company, of Yonkers, N. Y., made its ninth semi-annual distribution of bonuses to its older employees recently. Approximately \$65,000 was distributed among 2,500 men and women, making a total of \$600,000 which the company has shared with its employees since the plan was put into effect. Employees who had been with the company ten years or more received checks equal to 10 per cent. of their wages in the preceding six months, and the five-year employees got checks for 5 per cent. of their compensation in the same period.

Tearful eyes, some of them those of American spectators, looked at the wedding in a Paris hospital of the Corsican lieutenant Cantora, who lost both eyes and his left arm during the Marne fighting, and his fiancée, Mlle. Patricion, a fellow-countrywoman, who came from Ajaccio for the ceremony. Immediately after being wounded Cantora wrote to his fiancée returning her the engagement ring and offering to release her from her promise. She refused the offer, saying she felt all the more bound to keep faith with him. At the wedding Cantora wore the cross of the Legion of Honor and the much-prized military medal, both awarded him for his bravery.

To handle the large number of submarines which are to be built for the navy it has been suggested that the Government should construct small drydocks which could be kept at submarine bases. These small floating drydocks, about 300 feet in length, would not only be adapted to use for submarines, but for destroyers and large naval tugs. As they can be taken from one port to another, they could be utilized in establishing temporary bases for submarines and in the development of a general scheme for their mobilization and distribution. It is suggested that it might be possible under certain weather conditions to make use of such docks in raising sunken submarines, possibly using two, one on either side of the submarine. After they were attached by cables they could be pumped out to lift the submarine, much as pontoons were used in raising the F-4. It is estimated that a 300-foot floating drydock could handle a 5,000-ton ship. The 550-foot floating drydock at New Orleans is able to raise 18,000 tons.

BROTHER X

— OR —

THE GOBBLERS OF TURKEY NECK

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVII.

BROTHER D SEES A GHOST.

"Burton!" exclaimed Fred, as a man who carried a tin box in his hand darted in among the trees.

"After him!" cried Fred. "Remember the reward for his capture. By Jove, it would do me a world of good to see that scoundrel landed in jail!"

Between the detective and the Gobblers it looked as though Mr. Burton was likely to have all he could do to keep out of the hands of the law that night, and probably it would have been just as well for him if he had left the empty box alone.

Ran was wondering what the superintendent could want with it, and if, after all, in spite of what Brother X had said, it could have been he who had unearthed the money.

"We can't take him, Fred," he said, as they ran across the clearing. "We mustn't; what we want to do is to track him and find where his hang-out is, and whether he has got the money or not."

"I guess you're about right," said Fred. "A little detective work first can't do any harm, only he mustn't escape."

"I don't intend to let him," said Ran. "Leave it to me, Brother D. Get back to the boys, and look after Brother X. You are the best fellow to stay with him, for the others will be wanting to get back to town."

They had reached the woods by this time and could hear Burton crashing among the bushes on ahead of them, for the place was very much overgrown.

"I don't want to leave you," said Fred.

"You must!" replied Ran. "I can do better alone. I've got a plan, and I can't carry it out if you are with me. Besides, you must get back to Jack."

"If you command it, Brother A, I suppose I must go," replied Fred; "but it does seem like deserting you, all the same."

"Go!" said Ran, springing over the fence and hurrying into the woods.

There was nothing else for Fred to do but to retreat, since the Gobblers had sworn to obey their leader in all things.

So, leaving Ran to look after himself, Fred made all possible haste back, joining the party just before they reached the old house at the head of the cave.

Of course there was a good deal of excitement when he told about Ran's discovery, and where he had gone.

It was getting pretty late, however, and the Gobblers were anxious to be off, so, having made Jack as comfortable as possible on the old bed, which, fortunately, had a good mattress and pillows, they all took their boats and started across the bay, leaving Fred to watch Brother X alone.

It was a dreary business.

With the exception of one old chair, there was no other furniture in the room but the bed on which Jack lay.

Fred placed the lantern on the floor in the corner and sat down in the chair close to Jack's side, watching him intently and wondering where all this was going to end.

How he slept! Not once had he moved during the journey from the hole, and yet he had been pretty well shaken up at times where the way was rough.

Fred began to wonder if he would ever wake up, and along toward midnight he grew quite alarmed about it, for Brother X scarcely seemed to breathe.

At last Fred dropped off himself, and when he awoke, which he did suddenly after he had been asleep about twenty minutes, to his great joy he saw Jack sitting up in bed and staring at him.

"Fred! What's the matter?" he exclaimed. "How in the world did I come here?"

"Why, that's all right," replied Fred. "We brought you here. This is the old house at the head of the cove, you know. How do you feel?"

"Why, I feel ever so much better. Quite like myself. Did I go to sleep there under the trees?"

"That's what you did. Here, take a drink of water and then lie down again. You don't want to try to do too much at once. Hold on! This water has been standing here so long that it has got pretty hot. I'll run down to the spring and get a fresh pail."

"I wish you would," said Jack in a voice more like his own than anything Fred had heard yet. "A drink of good cold water would suit me first-rate."

"I won't be a minute," replied Fred, taking the pail and the lantern. "You won't mind staying here in the dark?"

"Not at all. Likely enough you'll find me asleep again when you get back; if I am, why just wake me up."

"You bet I will," laughed Fred. "I'm not going to have any more sleeping for a while. Good-by, old man. Brace up. You are lots better now, and we will have one of our old-time talks when I come back."

Fred hurried to the spring and filled the pail.

As he entered the door it seemed to him that he could hear footsteps on the floor above, and he wondered if Jack had got out of bed.

He passed on to the foot of the stairs, and just as he was about to ascend a gust of wind sweeping through the open door extinguished the lantern, leaving Brother D in total darkness.

This, however, did not bother him a bit. He did not even stop to light the lantern, but went bounding up the stairs in the dark, when all at once a strange sight met his gaze at the top of the step.

A flaring light suddenly broke upon the darkness, and Fred saw the tall figure of a man standing at the head of the stairs looking down at him.

The face was fearfully thin, and a long, white beard extending almost down to his waist concealed the lower part of his features, while hair equally white hung down about his neck and shoulders.

Suddenly the figure raised his hand and pointed down at Fred, saying in a deep, sepulchral voice:

"Boy! You will never find the missing money! Never! It is deep down under the water in the bottom of the bay!"

As these strange words were spoken the light was suddenly extinguished, leaving Fred, with wildly beating heart, standing in darkness most profound.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROTHER D TURNS DETECTIVE.

Had Fred seen a ghost?

He thought so then, as far as his astonishment allowed him to think at all, and we propose to leave him to make the most of it while we return to Ran Morgan, who was trying to persuade himself that he was a first-class detective just about that time.

This was just like Ran. If there was anything he thoroughly enjoyed it was the mysterious.

In fact, he was the originator of the idea of the Gobblers, and the original aim of the society was to ferret out the facts in Bart Burton's past, in the hope that they would be able to get up such a clear case against him that he would be discharged.

Before the Gobblers had a chance to gobble very long in that direction the affair of Brother X occurred, and the whole work of the society was changed.

Ran was to have been the detective, and in order to get down to his business he had particularly cultivated Superintendent Burton's acquaintance so as to get on the blind side of him, as he expressed it. He had succeeded pretty well, too, and Burton had often been heard to declare that he thought a good deal of Ran.

Actually, this was the reason why Ran wanted to tackle the man alone.

He dropped his turkey-head mask among the bushes, and ran on as noiselessly as possible, but did not try to catch up with Burton.

Ran had his reasons for this.

He knew Turkey Neck better than most of the boys,

having done considerable partridge hunting over this ground, and he knew that Burton could not go much further without coming out upon the shore of the bay at a point about two miles beyond the old mill.

"There's no use of my giving myself away by kicking up a row here in the woods," thought Ran. "I'm just going to take chances and see if I can't meet him accidentally on the shore."

So he struck off considerable to the left, which would bring him out on the shore a little quicker than Burton could reach it by going the way he was then following, and the move proved entirely successful, for he had scarcely struck the beach when he saw Burton come panting out of the bushes carrying the tin box.

The superintendent seemed to be utterly exhausted, for he sank down upon the sand all out of breath.

Ran walked along leisurely, making no effort to conceal himself.

Without appearing to look toward the superintendent, he still kept his eye on him, and knew the moment he was first seen.

Burton sprang up, and was about to step back among the bushes when Ran called out:

"Hello, boss! What in thunder! Is that you?"

Mr. Burton stopped and stared.

"Ran Morgan! Whatever brought you here?" he exclaimed. "Are you one of those gobbling idiots? Are you hunting me down, or what?"

"Do I look like an idiot?" laughed Ran. "As for hunting you down, I'm not in it. You always stood my friend, Bart Burton, and now that you are in trouble I suppose I ought to stand yours."

Burton seemed a good deal affected.

"I don't know whether I have any friends or not," he said. "I guess I haven't got many in Windhaven, but, look here, Ran, if you are really my friend tell me what brought you here at this time of night. That's the way you can prove your position, boy."

"Well, I was looking for you."

"For me?"

"Yes. Detective Fay told me you were hiding somewhere on Turkey Neck, and I thought I would come and warn you. I don't know whether you will thank me for it or not."

"Do you know anything about this, Ran?" asked Burton, turning suddenly upon him and holding up the cash box.

"What is it?"

"A cash-box; don't you see?"

"Where did you get it?"

"Where did I get it? Why, it's mine. But I found it in the woods here. Ran, I think I can trust you."

"You can."

"I'll pay you well for what I want you to do."

"Hello!" cried Ran. "Say, boss, the money Tolland took, is it in that box?"

"It is."

"Oh, what a liar!" thought Ran. "What's he driving at now?"

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

ITALIAN ARMY SHOES.

The C. A. Eaton Company, of Brockton, Mass., has received a heavy order for shoes from the Italian Government. While the size of the order was not stated by the firm's local manager, it is understood to be for 2,000,000 pairs. The contracts have been signed and the firm's factories at Brockton and Augusta have begun work on the order. The terms of the contract call for the production at the two factories of 15,000 pairs of shoes per day, it being necessary to run the factories night and day.

The Eaton Company, with its present day shift at the two factories is now turning out 250,000 pairs of shoes a month. With the new order they will be required to produce 375,000 pairs in the same period. The latest contract to be awarded the Eaton concern is the third received by the firm. Other Brockton shoe manufacturing firms are looking for foreign army orders. The Italian Government purchasing commissions now in this country will probably place additional shoe orders with Brockton manufacturers in the near future.

MILLION FOR BALL PLAYER.

William Buek Kenworthy, second baseman of the Kansas City Federal League team, has fallen heir to a million dollars from the estate of his uncle, Joshua Kenworthy, late of London, England, who was burned to death in a hotel in Connecticut a year ago while touring this country. This uncle inherited \$30,000,000 a number of years ago, and at the time of his death he had increased this fortune to \$50,000,000. He had divided the money among relatives, both in the United States, England and Ireland.

Buek Kenworthy's father and mother and three brothers put in a claim for a share of the estate, and definite word has been received from London that the claim has been allowed. Kenworthy admitted the story.

Five million dollars was allotted to his family. He said that the estate would have been settled and the money paid before this had it not been for the war.

Kenworthy is single and was born at Cambridge, Ohio. He played his first professional ball with East Liverpool, Ohio. Next he went to Zanesville, in the Central League, where he played in 1908-10. In 1911 he went to the Denver club, and the Washington American League club picked him up in 1912. When Clark Griffith sent him to Sacramento, in 1913, he jumped to the Kansas City Federal League team. The day he received the word of his good fortune he made a home run.

QUEER HAPPENINGS.

House of John M. Myers, school principal at Willington, N. J., ruined by water, faucet left on in June, running all summer.

Ralph Vreeland, seventy-seven, of Bloomingdale, N. J., civil war veteran on pension list for thirty years, receives notice pension stopped because he was deserter.

A blue heron pecked out left eye of Louis Ellenson, twelve, of Asbury Park, N. J., when he tried to capture it.

Mrs. Violet Bimont hid heroin in loaf of bread for husband, prisoner in Bronx; caught and arrested.

Morris Eisner, seventy-five, No. 151 Norfolk street, fell eight inches, fracturing skull and died.

George Greego, farmer near Mineola, L. I., refuses request for bushel of potatoes from stranger, who shoots him in abdomen.

Health Inspector Tremallo, Passaic, N. J., empties 1,500 bottles of soft drinks into sewer, seized from bottling works that violated law.

Prize pony of John C. Voight, Morristown, N. J., will have artificial foot when it exhibits at horse show this fall.

Some one put shunk in grand piano—and then forgot about it—at autumn dance of Free From Care Club, Winsted, Conn.

New York City gains 80,000 hours' work daily, at no extra cost, by putting into effect winter schedule for employees.

Morris Schultz and Joseph Lach held in \$2,000 bail, charged with offering paper for making dollar-bills at \$50 a yard.

Tortoise, five feet in diameter, washed ashore on the beach at Freeport, L. I.

"I came to clean up New York," said Antonio Madris, seventeen, of Providence, when arrested at Providence Line pier. Had revolver, cartridges, flashlight, jimmy and screwdriver.

Subterranean lake on farm of Johnston Cornish, of Harmony Township, N. J., has resulted in his vegetable garden sinking twelve feet.

Boy horsethief captured at Winsted, Conn., wears cowboy hat, has rifle strapped to saddle.

Seymour, Conn., man gets injunction to prevent Seymour Manufacturing Company's plant from operating at night. Says it disturbs his sleep.

John S. Whitesell, Allamuchy, N. J., is dragged quarter of a mile by runaway horse and hangs on until horse tires and stops.

Charles Buck, Jr., four, Jamaica, L. I., eats ink berries in Forest Park and dies.

District Attorney Cropsey, Brooklyn, finds rats chewing up documentary evidence, and indicts them with rat-traps.

Ethel L. Lawes, matron of Belknap Home, Far Rockaway, L. I., awakens at dawn to find stranger kissing her; has him arrested.

William Schember, of Glendale, L. I., complains to police of loafers on near-by corner, and first person arrested is his own son.

Richard T. Cronin and Philip Ahearn, cousins, die in same hospital at Hartford, Conn., both from injuries in pole vaulting.

Charles Miller, arraigned in dresses at Yorkville court, pleads he always wore women's clothes—his mother taught him.

SINBAD THE SECOND

— OR —

The Wonderful Adventures of a New Monte Cristo

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVI.

SINBAD'S LECTURE—STEVE MIGGS SUSTAINS A GREAT SHOCK.

The eventful Friday came, eventful to Sinbad as well as to the poor children to whom he was showing kindness. The large room was crowded. In the front seat sat Stephen Miggs, and near at hand was Jacques Dupree.

A man Sinbad had brought with him from London was exhibiting the views on the stereopticon, and Sinbad himself, standing on the platform in front of the sheet, acted as lecturer.

The majority of the slides had been of a comic nature, whereas the children had been highly pleased. It seemed as if it was time to have a change. At last Sinbad thought so, for he came to the front of the platform and said a few words.

"My friends," he remarked, "we will pass from the gay to the grave. I shall now present to you a series of views showing you how a ship left port on a long voyage, what befell it on the way, and what happened to those who sailed with it."

Jacques was all attention now, for Sinbad's design was made clear to him.

"The first view I shall present," said Sinbad, "is the ship itself, a bark, as you will see."

The audience now looked, and they saw a ship, excellently painted, sailing out of the harbor into the open sea. The audience, most of whom were boys, burst into applause.

Jacques kept his eye on Stephen Miggs, who so far seemed to be paying little attention to the exhibiton. The Frenchman saw that Sinbad was regarding Mr. Miggs very keenly, and that he looked somewhat disappointed at the latter's apathy. Perhaps if Stephen Miggs had read the name Swiftsure, which was printed in very small letters, he would not have shown such indifference.

"Now, boys," said Sinbad, "here's a picture of the captain of the bark. A fine, manly-looking skipper, is he not?"

Stephen Miggs sat bolt upright now. Jacques smiled, and Sinbad's eyes gleamed. The picture of the captain shown by the stereopticon was the living image of Saul Dedar!

Of course Sinbad's description was given in jest, for the name and surname written in every feature of his face.

"The mate—here he is," continued Sinbad, acting as

lecturer, "is a worthy assistant to such a captain—a jolly jack tar."

This time Stephen Miggs turned white and passed his hand across his brow as if he felt oppressed. He sat staring at the portrait, which was a faithful one of Richard Quince, otherwise Don Ricardo Quin, the mate of the Swiftsure.

"Haven't you some comic views?" said Stephen Miggs, speaking with an effort. "I think the boys like them better, Mr. Sinbad."

"No, no!" came voices from all parts of the room. "The ship—the ship!"

"You see, Mr. Miggs, they don't agree with you."

"So I observe," answered Steve Miggs, biting his lips. "Please the children, by all means."

"Now we'll proceed. Boys," said Sinbad, "a very important member of a crew, as you'll know when you go to sea, is the steward of the ship. Your comfort depends on him. This is the steward of the bark."

Jacques was astounded at Sinbad's audacity. There on the lantern was Stephen Miggs looking at his living representative, who sat with pallid face staring in wonder at the picture.

"What does this mean?" he gasped in low tones. "Myself as I looked ten years ago."

"Monsieur, you don't seem well," observed Jacques.

"Yes—yes, I'm all right," returned the other hoarsely.

"Perhaps," said the Frenchman, "the picture recalls sad memories. It resembles you so much. Is it possible it can be your brother, who has since died?"

Stephen Miggs sat stupefied, unable to make any reply.

If he had looked up, the terrible expression on Sinbad's face would have appalled him.

"It is the man," muttered Sinbad, passionately. "Now to make sure."

"A ship's voyage," said Sinbad, "is not always exciting, but this one had a very eventful time. There were five passengers on board. Look at them."

Instantly was displayed a picture showing a man, a woman, two boys and a girl. Stephen Miggs half rose from his seat as if he meant to leave the hall.

"Don't go, Mr. Miggs," said Jacques, detaining him. "Recollect we are strangers here."

Stephen Miggs sank helplessly into his seat as if he had no life in him, with his eyes fixed upon the picture which seemed to fascinate him.

The view changed, and next the ship was seen laboring

in a heavy sea, with a small boat riding the waves by its side. In the boat were the five passengers, extending their arms, evidently in an appeal for mercy, to the crowd of people collected at the bulwarks.

The scene was so graphic that loud shouts of approval came from the audience.

"It needs a little explanation," said Sinbad. "The boat is not putting off from a sinking ship. No, the bark is all right, but the captain, officers and crew are villains. They have discovered that the male passenger had great riches with him, so they have robbed him, and turned him and his family adrift in an open boat in a raging sea to perish."

A thrill of horror pervaded the room.

"What is that man with the cask doing, sir?" asked a small boy, one of the audience.

Sinbad's face turned livid as the question was put to him.

"That is the steward," he said, speaking very slowly, fixing his eyes on Stephen Miggs with a glance of the bitterest hate. "The poor people in the boat are without water. The steward from whom they have begged it refuses their request and empties a water cask before their eyes. 'There is water all around you,' he says. 'Drink it.'"

The children sat spellbound. The thrilling manner in which Sinbad explained this ocean tragedy made it appear that he was describing something that had actually happened, and not merely the result of an artist's fancy.

During the whole of the explanation Stephen Miggs had sat like a man in a dream, neither moving nor speaking. When Sinbad hissed out the reply of the steward to the passengers, he was instantly aroused.

He sprang to his feet and bounded towards the platform, until he was only a yard or two away from Sinbad.

"Who are you?" he asked, with quivering lips. "Boy or demon; have you risen from the dead?"

"I am Sinbad the Second!"

Stephen Miggs raised his fist as if he meant to rush on the mysterious boy, but he had been so overwrought by what he had gone through that he could endure no more, and, pressing his hand to his forehead, he fell in a heap on the floor.

The room was in an uproar in a moment. The younger children were frightened to death by what had happened, and all were making for the door, knowing well that the entertainment would not be resumed. Two or three men sprang towards Stephen Miggs to render him assistance.

Jacques was already bending over him, and Sinbad had jumped hastily from the platform, and was whispering in his friend's ear.

"Will he live, Jacques?"

"Yes, the fit will soon pass away."

"Thank goodness. I shall not be cheated of my revenge."

"Sir," said one of the villagers, "Mr. Miggs should be taken home. I have already sent for a doctor."

Sinbad gave Jacques a significant look which the Frenchman understood.

"I am a doctor," said Jacques, quickly. "Your friend is safe in my hands."

"There is a carriage at the door," remarked Sinbad, a few moments later. "I should think your patient might be taken away now."

"Certainly; it is quite safe."

"You will go with him?" said one of the villagers.

"Of course, a doctor cannot desert a sick man. Myself and my friend will not lose sight of him. Pray, gentlemen, assist me in carrying him out."

The crowd at the entrance made way for the sick man, and the driver opened the door of the coach so that he might be placed inside.

Jacques almost dropped his burden, for he had had a great surprise. The coachman was Con Cregan.

Sinbad and Jacques followed the sick man into the carriage. Con mounted the box, whipped up his horses, and away they started.

"So you knew the carriage was there, Sinbad?"

"Yes; all was prepared. If he had not fallen into a fit I should have seized him outside the hall."

"We are, of course," laughed Jacques, "taking him to his home?"

"Certainly. You can hear the waves beating. We are not far away."

At this moment Con gave a shrill whistle, and instantly it was replied to.

The coach stopped.

"Where are we?"

"At the beach. Is he still unconscious, Jacques?"

"Yes."

"So much the better."

Half a dozen men stood around the door now. Stephen Miggs was lifted out, taken by these men in their arms, carried down the beach to the water, and dropped into a boat which lay there.

Sinbad and Jacques followed. So did Con Cregan, quite forgetting his horses.

"To the yacht!" shouted Sinbad.

"Faith, it's for your lives, boys, ye must pull. It's meself was in a British prison once, an', begorra, it's enough."

"We shall be pursued and captured."

"Jacques! Jacques! What are you saying? Is there any ship afloat can overtake the Avenger? Before the alarm can be raised and a ship sent in pursuit we shall be twenty or thirty miles away."

Ten minutes later the Avenger was rushing through the waves at a speed that defied pursuit, and Stephen Miggs, just coming to his senses, was staring around the cabin in which he had been placed, not yet sufficiently recovered to understand what had happened.

CHAPTER XVII.

SINBAD INTERVIEWS THE PRISONER—WHAT HAPPENED AT CAPE VERDE ISLANDS.

No doubt the Avenger was pursued.

This would be certain to happen in any country with a settled government, but the yacht had a good start, and kept away from the English coast, so she saw nothing of any vessels sent after her. Before morning Sinbad was convinced that all danger was past.

"How is your prisoner, Neptune?" inquired Sinbad of the black cook as he entered the cabin.

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

Passenger trains on the Mahoning division of the Erie railroad have been equipped with a device which records the speed over the entire distance traveled. If at the end of the run the device shows that the speed has exceeded that prescribed by the rules the enginemen are suspended. Trains are permitted to travel sixty miles an hour, but an engineer has a margin of six miles above that speed.

One of the factories that runs at the State penal farm, Greencastle, Ind., six days in the week is the one that turns out the chewing tobacco for the 700 inmates. The prisoners receive chewing tobacco, but no smoking. In order to minimize the cost of the great quantities of "chewing" used, the trustees put in a tobacco press and the raw material is bought and the licorice and other ingredients are put in the mixture, and it is all pressed on the farm. The inmates say the home-made "chewing" is as good as that made in the large factories.

Last year the Chinese Government tried the experiment of intrusting the building of nine gunboats to a Chinese company, the Yangtse Engineering Works, Limited, at Hankow. Three boats have been completed, and they have been launched. The remaining are under construction. The boats are stated to be about 100 feet in length, are intended for river use, and, while smaller, are like some of the river boats employed by foreign Governments.

The United States Lighthouse Service has recently devised a form of printed postcard for the use of mariners in reporting unsatisfactory condition of aids to navigation, which, it is believed, will be useful in obtaining prompt information as to defects in aids. The card is printed in such form that it is simply necessary to insert the name of the vessel reporting, with name of aid to navigation, and date and time when observed, together with any desirable additional remarks, and forward to the lighthouse inspector concerned. This arrangement will be given a trial in the fifth lighthouse district, with headquarters at Baltimore, Md., and if found satisfactory, its use will be extended to other districts.

The first municipal picnic in the United States was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, the other day. It was an event for grown-ups and children. The streets of the city were deserted, and, although 300,000 persons attended four parks in which the exercises were held, not a single accident marred the celebration. One of the most inspiring sights of the day's attractions was a dance in Eden Park. One of the reserve reservoirs, which has been undergoing repairs, was turned into a huge dancing floor. Nearly 7,000 persons were dancing when the bugle sounded, ending the programme.

A report comes to local officials that the British Ambassador at Washington has interested himself in the case

of Thomas Maxwell, now serving his forty-fourth year for a murder committed in Marinette County, Wis., in 1872. He was convicted of murdering Walter Foster in an altercation over a woman and given a life sentence, and for many years has been a trusty in Waupun. He is now nearing the age of ninety. It is reported relatives have died in England and have left him a large fortune. His parole will be asked.

Two small alligators, each about three feet long, but nearly twenty-five years old, are causing the city water department of Anderson, Ind., some concern because of their meat bill, although the cost has averaged not more than \$20 a year. The last bill just presented for meat was \$15 and because that bill was for only one feed, City Clerk Collins and City Comptroller Richter were astonished. It was explained, however, that the alligators had fasted since October last. It is regarded doubtful whether the alligators will again manifest hunger until next spring, but the records show that perfectly good meat for the two alligators has cost the city about \$400.

William Bernshouse, who is known as "the grand old man of Hammonton, N. J.," attributes his almost perfect health to the fact that he is an enthusiastic pedestrian and that he never has indulged in intoxicating liquor. He settled in Hammonton in the forties, at a time when there were less than a dozen houses in what now is the second largest municipality in Atlantic County. Although in his eighty-second year, Bernshouse averages from fifty to sixty miles of walking each week. About a year ago he was one of a party of surveyors who inspected and appraised the damage done to a timber tract where more than 4,000 acres were burned over by fire, supposedly caused by sparks from a locomotive.

Last autumn the storks left Russia and Galicia earlier than usual; they were noticed in flocks of thirty to a hundred on their way through Austria, where they alighted on the roofs and chimneys of the houses to rest before continuing their journey south. Other birds of passage have deserted their old routes of flight and have chosen new air-roads along less disturbed regions. Both going and returning, these birds were observed in places where they were never seen before and were missed in the localities where battles were raging. In Luxemburg, where otherwise millions of birds congregate in the leafy forests, there are now scarcely any to be seen or heard. As an instance how the birds have deserted Luxemburg, a nature lover writes that "whole oat fields have sprung up along the roads and in the market squares of the little towns and villages where the horses have been fed as the cavalry passed through." This would never have been possible in other years, for then the birds would soon have pecked up every grain that fell to the ground.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A vessel with 200 Detroit liquor dealers as passengers was recently refused permission to land at Goderich, Ontario, because many of those on board were of German birth or extraction, and the local Canadian authorities were of the opinion it was a "German invasion."

Declaring his white hair a deceptive ruse of the years, Hugh Cooper, ninety-three, begged Acting Judge Charles Clark of the North Side Municipal Court, Kansas City, to give him a chance to "come back." Cooper has been at the Jackson County Poor Farm, Kansas, for five years. "I am not a vagrant, your honor," Cooper said. "I left the farm because I hate to depend on charity for my livelihood. I left because I know I can come back." "Go and try it, and good luck to you," said the judge.

Tactics borrowed from the trench warfare in Europe enabled three robbers to loot the Farmers' State Bank, Jefferson, Okla. Before entering the bank the men broke into a hardware store and stole several coils of barbed wire with which they erected entanglements about the bank. Four charges of explosives were used to wreck the safe. The first explosion aroused the townspeople, but before the citizens could devise a way of overcoming the wire barrier, the robbers had taken \$2,000 and escaped in a motor car. Poses followed them as far as Hunniwell, Kan., but there lost the trail.

The American merchant marine has been building up rapidly since the outbreak of the present great war in Europe. The flag of the United States now flies on more vessels than at any time since 1863. Edwin F. Sweet, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, made public on Aug. 30 figures for the fiscal year ended June 30, showing that on that date there were 2,568 ships, with a gross tonnage of 1,813,775, under American register in the foreign trade. This is an increase of 363 ships, with a gross tonnage of 737,623, for the year. Mr. Sweet regards the increase as due to the new American registry law.

The dragon trees of Teneriffe are really a species of gigantic asparagus. One tree, situated at Laguna, the ecclesiastical capital of the island, is said to be several

thousand years old. The growth of these dragon trees is very slow and they throw out no branches until they have blossomed, which seldom takes place before their fifteenth year and sometimes not until their thirtieth. The oldest dragon tree known in the island was that at Orotava, which was at least 6,000 years old—some botanists say 10,000. It was about sixty feet high, with a trunk forty-eight feet in circumference at the base. The ancient inhabitants of the island, the Guanonos, performed their religious rites in its hollow trunk. In 1867 the upper part of the tree was broken off during a storm, and though every effort was made to preserve the remainder it gradually decayed and there is now no trace of it left. The sap of the tree, a resinous substance like dark treacle, is called dragon's blood. It becomes brittle and crumbling when dry and is an article of commerce used in medicine. There are other kinds of dragon trees in different parts of the world, but this particular species is peculiar to the Canary and Cape Verde islands.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

"Oh, John, dear, don't you hear?" said Mrs. Kidby. "How delightfully the baby crows!" "Crows? Humph!" said Kidby, "I'd crow myself if I were boss of the house."

Pastor—It would surprise you to know how much counterfeit money we receive in the contribution boxes in the course of a year. Thoughtless Friend—I suppose so. How do you manage to work it all off?

Little Ned—Don't take away the light. Mamma—I want you to learn to sleep without a light. Little Ned—Must I sleep in the dark? Mamma—Yes. Little Ned—Well, then, wait a minute. I guess I'll get up and say my prayers a little more carefully.

Edward—Isn't Dick going off in his writings? Forrest—I hadn't noticed it. Edward—It seems to me he has lost that exquisite delicacy of touch he used to have. Forrest (ruefully)—By Jove! You wouldn't think so if you had seen him work me for a ten this morning.

A washerwoman applied for help to a gentleman, who gave her a note to the manager of a certain club. It read as follows: "Dear Mr. X.—This woman wants washing." Very shortly the answer came back: "Dear Sir—I dare say she does, but I don't fancy the job."

"Witness," said a lawyer in the police court the other day, "you speak of Mr. Smith being well off. Is he worth \$5,000?" "No, sah." "Two thousand?" "No, sah; he hain't worf twenty-five cents." "Then how is he well off?" "Got a wife, sah, who s'ports de hull family, sah."

Car Driver—Me and that off horse has been working for the company for twelve years now. Passenger—That so? The company must think a great deal of you both. Car Driver—Well, I dunno. Last week the two of us were taken sick, and they got a doctor for the horse and docked me. Git up there now, Betsy!

THE MIDNIGHT SPECTER.

By Horace Appleton

I am a young clergyman.

I shall call myself Howard Danc.

What I am about to relate actually happened to me; at least, my senses tell me that it did.

I was not asleep and dreaming.

Of course, it is possible that I was mad; but that I should have been mad for just two hours and with nobody's knowledge I cannot believe.

I am, however, so suspicious of myself whenever I think upon the facts that I have never told them to my nearest friends.

I narrate them now under an assumed name, and feeling positive that they will come to the ears of no one who can possibly connect me with them, hoping in this way to be rid of a sort of nightmare that has haunted me for more than two years.

At that time, having a summer vacation, I resolved to spend it in visiting certain picturesque places of which I had heard much, and of which I had never yet looked upon.

And, first of all, to go to a place which I shall call Paradise Springs, though I must not allow you to think that I have given it its proper designation.

It was a sort of quiet watering-place, and there was a large hotel near the springs, but I did not purpose stopping there.

I intended to seek some more secluded lodging-place, where I could dress as I chose, and really recruit my health.

I entered the postoffice and inquired of the postmaster whether he knew of some quiet family who might be willing to take a boarder.

At the same time I informed him of my name and my vocation.

The postmaster, a good-natured sort of man, rubbing his chin for a while, said, slowly:

"Well, sir, I don't know many that haven't their houses full at this season of the year. There's one woman, to be sure, a decent widow, who has plenty of room, and would be willing enough to do for you; but the question is, whether you'd like it? Perhaps, though, being a clergyman, you'll laugh at me when I tell you why; but, to be fair with you, the place is said to be haunted. Old Ganley, who owns it, hasn't been able to let it for ten years; and when Mrs. Ridge, poor soul, had a mortgage foreclosed on her farm and was turned out of the old homestead, neck and crop, as one might say, why, old Ganley just goes to her and says: 'Now, Mrs. Ridge, if you choose to try my house rent free, you can. You can have it a year for nothing, if you can live there that long. And after that we'll talk it over.' And Mrs. Ridge, poor thing, says she: 'Why, Mr. Ganley, I will, and thank you, too; and I tell you more. I'll scour the ghost out of the house for you. Ghosts, in my opinion, Mr. Ganley, are mostly gentry.'

So the widow went over to the house, and she has kept it clean, and she says that, though she hears queer things

enough, and sees queer things, too, she's not afraid of 'em; but this summer she's tried to take boarders, and she's had half a dozen come and go. They stay one night; never any more. One of 'em had a fit and one a fever from what they saw, or thought they saw; and so, though the widow would like boarders, and is as tidy a house-keeper and as good a cook as any woman living, her rooms are empty. It would be a charity if you could try 'em—and if Satan is in that house, as some folks say, perhaps you could send him flying, being a clergyman."

"I will take Mrs. Ridge's address, if you will give it to me," said I. "At least I am not afraid of ghosts. If the house does not appear to be unhealthy I will brave whatever haunts it for a while."

Then, having been told to go straight on until I reached the church, and then turn to the left past the churchyard, and walk until I came to a red house on a hill, I thanked the postmaster and started on my way.

It was late in the day; the shadows already lay long beneath the trees that were set upon either side of the road.

At last I reached the house and opened the gate.

A woman instantly appeared on the threshold.

She was a tall, lean, worried-looking person of middle age, but she had a kind face, and, when I had explained my business, she smiled pleasantly, and answered:

"Well, now, it was kind of the postmaster to send you, and, since you know the ghost story, why, there's no need of my talking about it. I've always had a fancy that if I had more education I could find out all about it. Ghosts I never believed in, and this ain't a damp house built over a marsh. Its cellar is as dry as a chip, and the foundations are all right. A builder came up here one day to examine 'em, and he said so; but I think—I think——" said Mrs. Ridge, rubbing her hands, "that it's something—scientific—very likely, that causes all these things; and when I hear a groan or so, and see something white I can't account for going upstairs, I say that to myself, and it quiets me down."

I bowed.

Oddly as she expressed herself, I knew very well what poor Mrs. Ridge meant.

Natural and not supernatural causes had frightened away her boarders, and proper investigation might reveal the secret.

Perhaps such investigation might be amusing.

Meanwhile Mrs. Ridge lived rent free, and the ghost might be regarded as her benefactor.

I took possession of my room at once, choosing the one that was pre-eminently the haunted chamber.

Then, while my hostess was preparing tea, I wandered out, and without premeditation turned my steps toward the church—an old, moss-grown edifice—and leaning over the railing looked at the quiet graves that now lay in heavy shadow. I did not care to go in, or to read the epitaphs that doubtless gave, as they usually do, unmerited meed of praise to those who, while living, never had their due; but, turning away, I glanced down at my feet and saw that I had nearly trodden on a little exiled grave without the paling.

It was strange that it should have been made there.

Never in my experience had I seen a grave in such a position.

The grass grew thick upon it, wild roses nearly covered it, and, stooping low, I read upon the rough, gray stone at its head this one word—Jane.

Nothing else.

No age, no date, no praise. No scrap of verses.

Jane—and no more.

And who was Jane? I asked myself.

Some one too humble to lie amidst her betters in the graveyard there.

Somehow I breathed a sigh for Jane as I turned away from her resting-place.

The sun was quite gone now.

Twilight lay gray upon the scene; only a silver line kissed the purple tops of the distant hills.

As I walked on I remember now that several times I fancied I heard a light step following me, but turning I saw no one.

We had our tea in the kitchen, at a tiny table covered with a snowy cloth.

It was a good and comfortable meal.

Soon after, weary with my journey, I asked for a candle, and bade my hostess good night.

In ten minutes I was sound asleep.

It was midnight when I awakened, with a strange sensation creeping through my veins—a thrill rather than a chill.

I did not feel ill, but I confess I did feel frightened.

The room was almost perfectly dark, but through the darkness I saw a white shape pass and repass the foot of my bed.

It was slight and low, but after a little I saw it more plainly.

It bore the likeness of a human form, and it carried something in its arms.

“Am I dreaming?” I asked myself.

No, I was certainly wide awake.

My impulse was an ignoble one, I will confess it.

It was to cover my head with the quilts.

“You shall not do it,” I said to myself. “You shall look and know what it is that you have looked upon if such knowledge may be had. It may be that it is vouchsafed you to see what mortals call a ghost. It will not happen again. Make the most of so fine an opportunity.”

Resolutely I sat up in bed.

A thought came to me.

The widow Ridge might well desire to live rent free for the remainder of her life.

It might be worth her while to perform the role of apparition.

But now I saw the figure plainly.

It was that of a woman—or, rather, of a young and delicate girl.

It was clothed in a shroud-like garment, and held in its arms the semblance of a babe.

By what light I saw it I cannot tell; but its very features were growing plain to me.

Its eyes—large, sad eyes, with dark iris—turned upon me.

It mutely extended its hand and offered me something.

I extended mine to receive it.

As I touched it I knew that it was my own prayer-book, open at a certain place.

It was open at the burial service.

“You are not well this morning, sir,” said my landlady at the breakfast-table.

“Quite well now,” I answered. I had resolved to keep my own counsel.

That night, after long rambles in the woods and pleasant idleness under the orchard trees, I retired to the haunted chamber once again.

I threw myself outside of the counterpane, fully dressed, but slumber overcame me.

Again I awoke, this time to see a figure, fully revealed as by clear moonlight, very close to me—a girl in her shroud, with a babe in her arms.

She had taken my prayer-book from the table and held it toward me.

Again it was open at the burial service.

This time I took it from her boldly.

“What do you want? Why do you come here? Why do you show me this?” I asked.

And then came an answer, a strange, faint, far-away whisper.

“I want you to bury me!”

“To bury you?” I repeated. “Who are you?”

Fainter and fainter still came the voice, “I am Jane!” and the figure vanished.

And now there arose before me a memory of the lonely grave without the churchyard paling—the grave on whose headstone that little name was written.

Led by an impulse I could not resist, I, still keeping the prayer-book open in my hand, left my room, and, going downstairs, unbarred the hall-door and found myself in the open air; bareheaded I walked through the starlight to the graveyard.

I heard gentle footsteps behind me all the way, but I did not turn to see who followed.

At last I stood beside the exiled grave—and, still obeying the impulse that moved me against my judgment, read aloud the burial service.

At its close I heard a faint sigh, but I saw nothing.

When some weeks had passed thus peacefully I asked my hostess a few questions.

“Who was the ghost who haunted this house?” I asked, “and why was he said to haunt it? Is there a tradition concerning him?”

“It was said to be a young woman’s ghost,” said Mrs. Ridge, a faint blush rising to her cheek. “The old laws were very strict. Her husband, that she’d married secretly, ran off, and she couldn’t prove her marriage, poor thing! and they would not let her lie within the churchyard ground. Her old grandfather buried her and her babe just outside the paling. You can see the headstone there with her name—‘Jane’—upon it. The minister who would not bury her lived here when the story first got about. It used to be the parsonage.”

I returned home at the end of my vacation, and heard no more of Mrs. Ridge until the next year.

Then I found that she had prospered greatly.

Her house was full of boarders, whom the ghost never troubled, and she would probably soon be in condition to purchase it.

NEWS OF THE DAY

According to statistics published by the Pan-American Union, there were on January 1st, 1914, 232,816 telephones in Latin-America, as compared with 9,542,000 in the United States. Argentina stood first among the Latin-American countries, with 74,296, but Uruguay led in the proportion of telephones to population, with 1.05 per 100.

A neatly dressed, smooth-shaven man, about 60 years old, wearing spectacles, crossed the New York Central tracks between Hastings-on-Hudson and Dobbs Ferry the other afternoon. Slowly he undressed on the river bank and put on a bathing suit. From a pocket he drew a quart bottle of whisky and when he put it down it was empty. Then he waded out and fell face downward in the water. John Ryan and James Higgins, small boys in a rowboat, seized the man by his bathing suit, while the other rowed, and thus they towed him to shore.

Robert E. Peary, who was retired by act of Congress with the rank of Rear Admiral in recognition of his discovery of the North Pole in 1909, has offered his services to the Navy Department for any duty he may be called upon to perform. It was learned recently that he had written to Secretary Daniels, offering to take the necessary physical examination and perform any services which might be required of him in the development of the programme for national defense and military and naval preparedness.

It cost Herbert Holman, a young automobilist, who said he lived in a small town in Pennsylvania, \$25 the other day to gain a bit of knowledge as to the area of the "Village of Brooklyn." In the Flatbush Court, the young visitor was charged with overspeeding his motor on the Ocean Parkway. "Why, judge," he said, evidently puzzled over the complaint, "I was away outside the village limits at the time I put on speed." "Well, my young friend," returned the court, "you are now to learn that Brooklyn is some village and the tuition fee will be \$25." The astonished motorist from the Keystone State paid the fine and then hurried away to buy a map of New York City.

Some of our shore birds appear to make traveling their chief occupation. The American golden plover arrives in early June in the bleak, wind-swept "barren grounds" of Alaska, above the Arctic circle and far beyond the tree line, and, while the lakes are still icebound, hurriedly fashions a shabby little nest in the moss. By August it is in Labrador, where it stuffs itself with such quantities of "crowberries" that its flesh is actually stained by the dark purple juice. From Nova Scotia it strikes out to sea, and takes a direct course for the West Indies, one thousand miles away, finally reaching Brazil and the prairies of Argentina. Sixteen thousand miles does it traverse in order to spend ten weeks on the Arctic coast.

Dislike of the publicity that attended the efforts of physicians to stop the hiccoughing of Cortland Brooks, of Greenport, L. I., ten months ago, caused his relatives to keep secret the fact that the affliction had finally caused his death. Mr. Brooks became seriously ill almost a year ago, and began to hiccough. Greenport physicians tried in vain to halt the convulsions, and then called in specialists. Their efforts were also unavailing, and Brooks was finally taken to the Brooklyn Hospital last Thanksgiving Day and placed in a plaster cast, but he continued to hiccough, even when asleep. The surgeons decided that he had tuberculosis of the spine, and that the diseased bones were pressing on certain nerves, causing the convulsions. The case was pronounced unique, although tuberculosis of the spine is not uncommon.

The inferiority of the German aeroplane was made apparent in the early days of the war, as they were wholly unable to cope with either the French or the English machines in speed or in climbing abilities, and, as a result, the Taube flyers have been seen but seldom this year, and when they appeared they were careful not to venture near the firing lines. Now, however, it is stated that a new type of machine has appeared that is fully equal to anything the Allies possess. Little is known of the nature of the improvements in these new machines, but from their observed evolutions, it is quite evident that they are provided with engines of a power and reliability not heretofore possessed by the Germans, and those who have seen them have been much impressed with their speed and climbing abilities.

With an almost complete absence of demand from Europe, which is the chief market for furs, from the costly black fox and glossy beaver to the humble skunk and muskrat, combined with a material decline in the values of the higher priced pelts, the lot of the fur dealer or trapper in the Canadian Northwest is not a highly remunerative one at present. The supply is very good, according to reports from the North, which fact may tend to force prices still lower. One business house which has been doing considerable trade with Northern trappers and fur dealers reports that many of the well-known fur traders in Northern British Columbia and the Yukon are unable to pay their bills, because they have been unable to obtain anything like reasonable prices for their furs. It is anticipated, however, that there will be a demand for moderate-priced furs in the near future. A prominent dealer in Vancouver has pointed out that when times were good people were willing to pay high prices for the best furs and that they now require furs having the same artistic effect, but at a very moderate price. Black furs will be much in demand in Europe and elsewhere because of the almost universal mourning. Other furs, like the white fox, musquash, and lynx, will be dyed black to meet the demand.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

BARK ENDS WHALING CAREER.

The old whaling bark Morning Star was sold recently to the Eastern Coal Company of Providence, R. I., to carry coal from Southern ports after being in the whaling trade since 1853, when she was built at Dartmouth, Mass., by Matthew Mashow & Co. She is 238 tons burden.

The Morning Star sailed on her first voyage from New Bedford Nov. 10, 1853, under command of Captain Wm. Cleveland, and returned May 18, 1857, with 1,503 barrels of sperm oil. She came back from her last voyage on Sept. 17, 1914, under command of Captain Valentine Roza with 3,085 barrels of sperm oil after being away two years. During her sixty-two years of blubber hunting the Morning Star has been in every ocean, and is one of the last of the old wooden fleet of sailing whalers which filled the harbor of New Bedford fifty years ago.

\$3,000 SEWED IN SKIRT.

Mrs. Emma Shute, of Somerville, Ohio, fifty-six years old, expensively dressed and of evident refinement, who was found wandering aimlessly about the steamship piers at Twenty-third street and the Hudson River, is New York City, is in Bellevue Hospital. When she arrived the hems of her garments began to break with their weight of wealth and out rolled \$1,500 in gold coin and jewelry worth at least \$1,500. In an undergarment she had sewed two bank books, showing cash deposits of \$10,000 in the German National Bank of Cincinnati and \$10,000 in the Bank of Cincinnati.

She was unable to say how she came to be in this city or where she was stopping. The bank books revealed her identity and the fact that her husband, Henry Shute, is a resident of Somerville, Ohio.

Policemen had seen Mrs. Shute wandering about the piers and asking senseless questions. From each pier she was turned away, the employees not having time to talk with her. She was in an exceptionally dangerous part of the city. Across West street are many sailors' drinking-houses and there is a rough element in the side streets.

"It was fortunate that she did not lose consciousness there," said Dr. Gregory at Bellevue. "She easily could have been robbed of everything she had and perhaps her body would have been dropped into the river."

MEN AVAILABLE FOR WAR DUTY IN NEW YORK.

There are 2,500,000 men in New York State between the ages of 18 and 45, and, therefore, available for war duty, Secretary of State Hugo announced recently in one of his census bulletins.

The June enumeration shows, he says, that there were approximately 250 officers and 6,800 enlisted men at the army posts of the State; 60 officers and 1,300 men in New York's naval militia, and 1,000 officers and 16,080 men in the National Guard. Thousands of men besides these have had some military training, either in the regular army, National Guard or in college or military academies.

Figures obtained from the Adjutant General's office

show little change in the strength of the National Guard in fifty years. At present it stands: Officers, 1,009; enlisted men, 16,080; total, 17,069. In 1857 it was: Officers, 1,827; enlisted men, 14,608; total, 16,434.

The possible strength of the division under the present Federal regulations is: Officers, 743; enlisted men, 21,930; total, 22,673.

To give more men at least the rudiments of a military training, Lieut.-Col. E. V. Howard, of the Adjutant General's office, favors what he terms a "mild conscription." Every young man on reaching the age of eighteen years would be called to serve under the colors for three years, during which time he would give thirty days of active service each year. A call to arms would find then thousands of men better fitted to serve their country.

THE BAKER'S THERMOMETER.

"Bakers have a curious way of telling just what the temperature of the oven is," said a baker who had been in the business for more than a quarter of a century, "and they can tell, too, with almost marvelous accuracy. You take a man who is an expert in the business, and he can tell what the temperature of the oven is by simply touching the handle of the oven door. In nine cases out of ten he will not miss it to the fraction of a degree.

"Bakers have other ways, of course, of testing the heat of the oven. For instance, when baking bread they sometimes throw a piece of white paper into the oven, and if it turns brown the oven is at the proper temperature, or, when baking other things they will throw a little cornmeal flour into the oven in order to test the heat. But the baker's fingers are the best gauge, and when you come to think of the different temperatures required in baking different things, it is no small achievement to even approximate the heat of the oven by touching the handle of the oven door.

"Baker's figure that during the rising time of a loaf of bread, after it has been placed in the oven, it ought to be in a temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit. During the baking process, in order to cook the starch, expand the carbonic acid gas, air and steam and drive off the alcohol, the inside of the loaf must register at least 220 degrees. In baking rolls, buns, scones, tea biscuits, drop cakes, fancy cakes, New York cakes, muffins, puff cakes and things of that sort the oven must show a heat of 450 degrees or higher.

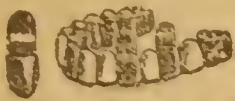
"When the oven is at 400 degrees it is fit for cream puffs, sugar cakes, queen cakes, rock cakes, jumbles, lady fingers, rough-and-ready and jelly rolls. At 350 degrees wine cakes, cup cakes, ginger nuts and snaps, pies, gingerbread, spice cakes, such as raisin, currant, citron, pound, bride and so on, may be baked. It requires a still lower temperature to bake wedding cakes, kisses, anise drops and things in this class.

"But whatever temperature the old baker wants he can tell when he has it by simply touching the handle of the oven door."

THE BURNING CIGARETTE.

The greatest trick joke out. A perfect imitation of a smouldering cigarette with bright red fire. It fools the wisest. Send 10c. and we will mail it. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

IMITATION GOLD TEETH.



Gold plated tooth, shape made so that it will fit any tooth. Price, 5c., postpaid. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

GOOD LUCK PUZZLE.



It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 10c. each. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

SEE-SAW PUZZLE.



The most absorbing puzzle seen for years. The kind you sit up half the night to do. The puzzle is to get both balls, one in each pocket. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase. Price, 20c. **C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.**

DELUSION TRICK.



A magic little box in three parts that is very mystifying to those not in the trick. A coin placed on a piece of paper disappears by dropping a nickel ring around it from the magic box. Made of hard wood two inches in diameter. Price, 12c. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

THE MAGIC NAIL.



A common nail is given for examination, and then instantly shown pierced through the finger; and yet, when taken out, the finger is found to be perfectly uninjured, and the nail is again given to be examined. Nicely finished. Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid. **C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.**

JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.



You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion. Price 10c. each by mail. **FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.**

TRAVELLING JOKE.

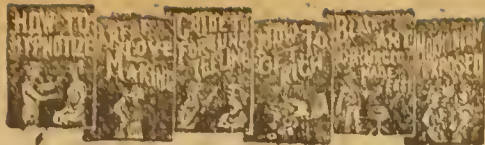


Yards upon yards of laughs. Don't miss it! Everyone falls for this one. It consists of a nice little bobbin around which is wound a spool of thread. You pin the bobbin under the lapel of your coat, and pull the end of the thread through your button hole, then watch your friends try to pick the piece of thread off your coat. Enough said! Get one! Price, 12c. each, by mail. Postage stamps taken same as money. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

GIANT SAW PUZZLE.



This puzzle contains twenty-one pieces of wood nicely finished; take them apart and put them together same as illustrated. Everybody would like to try it, as it is very fascinating. Price, by mail, postpaid, 25c. each. **C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.**



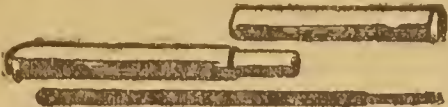
- 1 Short Stories 3 Love Making 9 Secrets of the Harem
- 5 Mormonism Exposed 10 Fortune Telling 19 Secrets for Women 31 Get a Gov't Job
- 6 Guide to Happy Marriage 11 Detective Stories 20 Conundrums 34 Special Secrets 60 Doctor's Private Book
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- 20 Conundrums 34 Special Secrets 60 Doctor's Private Book
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GLASS PEN.—Patent glass pen, with nice dip, writes like any ordinary pen; each put up in wooden box. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

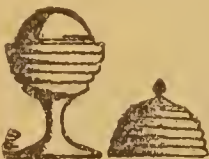
NAME CARDS



The newest fad in picture postals. They are beautifully lithographed in a variety of colors and have various names, such as Harry, Edith, etc., printed on the reverse side. Just the thing to mail to your friends. Price 6 for 10 cents,

by mail, postpaid. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

TRICK CUP.



Made of natural white wood turned, with two compartments; a round, black ball fits on those compartments; the other is a stationary ball. By a little practice you make the black ball vanish; a great trick novelty and immense seller. Price, 10c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

SURPRISE PERFUME BOTTLE.



Those in the joke may freely smell the perfume in the bottle, but the uninitiated, on removing the cork will receive the contents in his hands. This is a simple and clever joke. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DEAD SHOT SQUIRT PISTOL.



If you shoot a man with this "gun" he will be too mad to accept the ancient excuse—"I didn't know it was loaded." It loads easily with a full charge of water, and taking aim, press the rubber bulb at the butt of the Pistol, when a small stream of water is squirted into his face. The best thing to do then is to pocket your gun and run. There are "loads of fun" in this wicked little joker, which looks like a real revolver, trigger, cock, chambers, barrel and all. Price only 7c.; 4 for 25c.; one dozen 60c. by mail postpaid. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

THE PRINCESS OF YOGI CARD TRICK.



Four cards are held in the form of a fan and a spectator is requested to mentally select one of the four. The cards are now shuffled and one is openly taken away and placed in his pocket. The performer remarks that he has taken the card mentally selected by the spectator. The three cards are now displayed and the selected card is found to be missing. Reaching in his pocket the performer removes and exhibits the chosen card. Price, 15c. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

Ayvad's Water-Wings



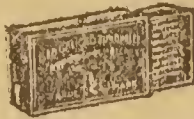
Learn to swim by one trial

Price 25 cents, Postpaid. These water-wings take up no more room than a pocket-handkerchief. They weigh 2 ounces and support from 50 to 250 pounds. With a pair anyone can learn to swim or float. For use, you have only to wet them, blow them up, and press together the two ends under the mouthpiece. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

ASTHMA

REMEDY sent to you on FREE TRIAL. If it cures, send \$1.00; if not, don't. Give express office. Write today. W.K. Sterline, 837 Ohio Ave., Sidney, Ohio.

TRICK MATCHES.



Consist of a Swedish safety box, filled with matches, which will not light. Just the thing to cure the match borrowing habit. Price, 5c., postpaid.

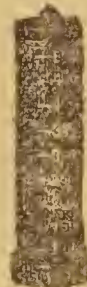
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

POCKET SAVINGS BANK.



A perfect little bank, handsomely nickel plated. Holds just five dollars (50 dimes). It cannot be opened until the bank is full, when it can be readily emptied and relocked, ready to be again refilled. Every parent should see that their children have a small savings bank, as the early habit of saving their dimes is of the greatest importance. Habits formed in early life are seldom forgotten in later years. Price of this little bank, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed postpaid. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

SURPRISE MOVING-PICTURE MACHINE.



It consists of a small nicked metal tube, 4 1/2 inches long, with a lens eye-view, which shows a pretty ballet girl or any other scene. Hand it to a friend who will be delighted with the first picture, tell him to turn the screw on the side of the instrument, to change the views, when a stream of water squirts in his face, much to his surprise. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, and one filling will suffice for four or five victims. Price, 30c. each by mail, postpaid; 4 for \$1.00. **H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

SURPRISE KINEMATOGRAPH.



The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nicked tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer. Price 25c. by mail, postpaid. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

EGGS OF PHARAOH'S SERPENTS.



A wonderful and startling novelty! "Pharaoh's Serpents" are produced from a small egg, no larger than a pea. Place one of them on a plate, touch fire to it with a common match, and instantly a large serpent, a yard or more in length, slowly uncoils itself from the burning egg. Each serpent assumes a different position. One will appear to be gliding over the ground, with head erect, as though spying danger; another will coil itself up, as if preparing for the fatal spring upon its victim, while another will stretch out lazily, apparently enjoying its usual noonday nap. Immediately after the egg stops burning, the serpent hardens, and may afterward be kept as an amusing curiosity. They are put up in wooden boxes, twelve eggs in a box. Price, 8c., 3 boxes for 20c.; 1 dozen boxes for 60c., sent by mail, postpaid. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**



JUMPING CARD.—A pretty little trick, easy to perform. Effect: A selected card returned to the deck jumps high into the air at the performer's command. Pack is held in one hand. Price of apparatus, with enough cards to perform the trick, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

DICE WATCHES

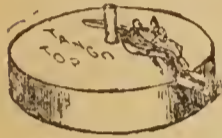


One of our best novelties. About the size of a watch, with a nickel case. A glass face encloses several ivory dice. On the rim of the case is a spring. By pressing it the dice are spun and scattered. The most intensely interesting games can be played with it.

It can be carried in the vest pocket. Formerly sold for \$1.00.

Price, 30c. each, by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

TANGO TOP

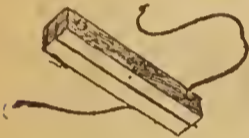


A brand new novelty. More fun than a circus. You spin the post with your fingers, and the snake tangoes all around the top of the circular metal box, without falling off, although it is not fastened in any way.

When the post stops spinning, the snake drops from the lid. What is the secret of its great attraction to the post? The marvel of the age.

Price, 10c. each, by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

STRING PUZZLE



This puzzle is a wonder. It consists of two pieces of wood. A hole is bored through the upper end of both. A red string passes through the holes. Take a knife, insert it between the wooden blocks and cut upwards. You separate the pieces of wood, and the string is apparently cut in two. Close the blocks together, seize an end of the string, and you can pull the entire cord through the holes, absolutely—not cut. Very mystifying.

Price, 12c. each, by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS.



A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks. These lilliputian fighters have real feathers, yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements when fighting are perfectly natural and lifelike, and the secret of their movements

is known only to the operator, who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantel ornaments. Price for the pair in a strong box, 10c.; 3 pairs for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

INITIAL WATCH FOB.



It has a neat enameled black strap, and small secure buckle, with a patent catch so that no watch can slip off. The handsome tortoise shell pendants are beautifully engraved with any initial you desire. The letter is fire gilt, cannot rub off, and is studded with nine Barrios diamonds. These fobs are the biggest value ever offered. Price, 25c. each, by mail, postpaid.

by mail, postpaid. FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

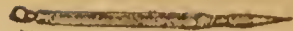
THE DISAPPEARING CIGAR.



A new and startling trick. You ask a friend if he will have a cigar; if he says yes (which is usually the case), you take from your pocket or cigar case, an ordinary cigar, and hand it to him. As he reaches out for it, the cigar instantly disappears right before his eyes, much to his astonishment. You can apologize, saying, you are very sorry, but that it was the last cigar you had, and the chances are that he will invite you to smoke with him if you will let him into the secret. It is not done by sleight-of-hand, but the cigar actually disappears so suddenly that it is impossible for the eye to follow it, and where it has gone, no one can tell. A wonderful illusion. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

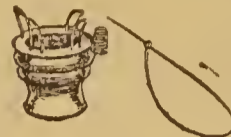
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

SMALL COLLAPSIBLE PENCILS



The name is... It looks small while it is hanging your watch-charm, and it is very handy in design, prettily nicked, and very colorful. But just hand the end of it to your and it begins to untelescope until he im there is no end to it. Besides its ability to make fun, it is a good useful pencil, too. Price, 15c. each, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St.,



KNITTER

Every boy who wears a whip-lash, pair of red or any other knitted article of similar kind should have a Knitter. Anybody can use it. The most beautiful signs can be made by colored worsteds with this handy little. It is handsomely lacquered, strongly made, and the wires are very durable.

Price, 10c. each, by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

CRAWLING BUGS



These giant beetles are fully enameled in natural, bright colors. There is a roller underneath, actuated by hidden springs. When the roller is wound up, the bug crawls about in the most lifelike manner. Try one on the table if you want to enjoy yourself.

Price, 12c. each, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St.,



THE MULTIPLYING CORKS.—A round box is shown to be empty and the spectators is allowed to place three corks in it. The cover is put on and the box is handed to one of the spectators, who, removing the cover, finds six corks in it. Three of the corks are now made to vanish mysteriously as they came. Very deceptive.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn.

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